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Canada. Commission on the State  
of the Public Records.

Report 1898

[Commissions and Committees  
of Inquiry]











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Canada. Public Records,  
Commission on the State of the

REPORT  
OF THE  
COMMISSIONERS  
APPOINTED TO INQUIRE  
INTO THE  
STATE OF THE PUBLIC RECORDS

1897



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## MINUTE OF COUNCIL

### APPOINTING THE COMMISSION.

Extract from a Report of the Committee of the Honourable the Privy Council,  
approved by His Excellency the Governor General on the 4th March, 1897.

A Treasury Board Minute, herewith, of the 19th February, 1897, recommends the appointment of the Deputy Minister of Finance, the Auditor General and the Under-Secretary of State, to be a Departmental Commission to report to the Treasury Board, in accordance with terms of the Order in Council of the 5th July, 1890, with a view to the periodical destruction of such papers and vouchers as may be deemed useless, and which are merely encumbering the vaults, &c., &c.

JOHN J. McGEE,

Clerk of the Privy Council.

### Treasury Board :—

The Treasury Board had their attention directed to the fact that in 1890, in consequence of action on the part of the Post Office Department, the attention of the Government was called to the fact that there was in several of the Departments a large quantity of vouchers and other documents, many of a routine character, which were useless and not only encumbered the vaults and record rooms, but formed a source of danger in case of fire. The subject was referred to the Minister of Finance and correspondence was thereupon had with the Imperial Treasury and through the High Commissioner with the other public offices in England, and the Minutes of the Treasury and other documents relating to the destruction of public records in England were procured and transmitted to Canada and after consideration thereof an Order in Council was passed on the 5th July, 1890, which provided that each department be requested to report separately as to the state of its records with the view of having those documents destroyed which were useless and merely encumbered the vaults, and that the case of each department be taken up by itself and examined by the Treasury Board and a report made to Council thereon so that a system may be adopted whereby the papers of each department may be weeded out, and what is found to be of no value destroyed after the lapse of certain periods.

After the Order in Council was passed, in consequence of the failure of Messrs. Baring Brothers and other circumstances, the Secretary of the Treasury Board was unable to give attention to the matter and it remained in abeyance. Attention has again been directed to the subject by the recent fire in the Western Block, and the Treasury Board are of opinion that immediate steps should be taken in regard to these documents, and they recommend that the Deputy Minister of Finance, the Auditor-General and the Under-Secretary of State be a Departmental Commission to examine into and report to the Treasury Board as to the state of the records in the several departments ; how and where they are kept and their safety in case of fire ; what papers or records might be destroyed and after what interval of time ; and generally to report fully on the subjects referred to in this Minute, and to make such suggestions as may seem to them best in the public interest in accordance with the terms of the Order in Council above quoted with a view to the adoption of a system for the safe keeping of the public records which are required to be preserved, and the periodical destruction of such papers and vouchers as may be deemed to be useless.



# REPORT.

## *To the Honourable the Treasury Board:*

The undersigned, in conformity with the terms of a Minute of the Treasury Board recommending their appointment as a departmental commission to inquire into the whole question of the state of the public records, which Minute was approved by His Excellency the Governor General in Council on the 4th March, 1897, have the honour to report :

That in the execution of this duty they have visited the several departments, and made as thorough an inspection of the records in each as circumstances would permit. This examination discloses a state of affairs which, in the opinion of the undersigned, calls for prompt and vigorous measures of reform.

The objects of the inquiry falling under several heads, it may, perhaps, be convenient to observe a similar division in this report. It is proposed, therefore, to examine the subject under the following sub-heads, which method seems calculated to exhibit the whole question in the clearest manner :

1. The actual state of the records and public documents in the custody of the several departments.
2. The danger to which they are exposed from fire.
3. What papers or records might be destroyed and after what interval of time.
4. General recommendations of the Commissioners.

### 1.—THE ACTUAL CONDITION OF AFFAIRS.

Throughout their inspection the commissioners were impressed with the lack of any community of plan among the several departments for the arrangement and preservation of their records. As a rule departmental papers for two or three years back are convenient of access. Those of older date are commonly relegated to the basement (apparently rather as lumber to be got rid of than as records to be preserved) where they are stored, often under conditions eminently unfavourable to their preservation and use. In some departments particular classes of papers are destroyed after periods varying from three to ten years. In the majority of instances, however, they remain indefinitely in underground rooms, growing more and more difficult of access as fresh accumulations are added to the store. This condition of affairs is due to the want of a uniform system throughout the service for the disposal of records, and is aggravated by the crowded state of

the departments which are gradually becoming choked with an ever increasing mass of documents.

The above remarks apply to public documents generally. As regards the older papers of historic interest which form the archives of the country, the undersigned are unable to speak more favourably. It is true there is a collection of valuable papers bearing on the early history of Canada in the Department of Agriculture, under the control of an official known as the Dominion Archivist, but this officer though amply qualified for the post, has never been provided with facilities for its adequate administration, nor enjoyed anything beyond a casual and perfunctory recognition. The Department of the Secretary of State possesses a similar collection of papers under the immediate charge of an officer known as "The Keeper of Records." These two branches of the public service, though ostensibly devoted to the promotion of a common object, are not in any sense of the word auxiliary to each other. On the contrary, they are distinct, and even antagonistic. The Commissioners, for instance, understand that for the purpose of bridging over breaks in the archives, copies have been made of documents in the libraries of European capitals when the originals of these very documents were at the time in the custody of one or other of the public departments. It is not too much to say that the rivalry existing between these offices has long been an obstacle to the attainment of that unity of responsibility and control essential to the introduction of a perfect system. Another collection of State papers relating to the century immediately preceding Confederation exists in the Privy Council Office, and there are many minor deposits to one of which reference may be made. In the Department of Indian Affairs the Commissioners were shown a number of bound volumes of manuscript containing the reports of the Indian Commissioners at Albany, from 1722-23, and amongst other matters of historic interest the story, in part, of the Mohawk war, the conspiracy of Pontiac, and the migration of the Six Nation Indians. These books are quite unprotected from fire and their destruction would be a serious loss. Thus, records which united would form a collection of rare interest, are dispersed throughout the departments, where they lie in every stage of insecurity, often unarranged and undescribed, suffering more or less from damp, their value sometimes unrecognized and their very existence, it may be, unknown. Nor is this surprising when it is borne in mind that until the fire of February last the care of records was not considered a matter of immediate concern.

## 2.—THE DANGER TO WHICH THE GOVERNMENT RECORDS ARE EXPOSED FROM FIRE.

Recent experience must have taught all persons, as it has greatly impressed the undersigned with the conviction, that the danger from fire to which the public records are exposed is a serious and ever present one.

On every hand the undersigned found that, owing to the lack of adequate protection, records and documents, valuable and otherwise, are not only constantly



exposed to the risk of fire but are in themselves a source of danger. The wooden cupboards and pine shelving almost universally used in the departments are a constant menace, and the frequent utilization of the corridors for storage space is a practice fraught with peril. Thus the protection sought to be afforded by fire-proof rooms and buildings is impaired by reason of the fittings being of combustible material.

The undersigned cannot refrain from mentioning some instances where the risk of loss by fire is of a particularly hazardous nature. The building occupied by the Geological Survey Department, containing specimens and records of a scientific and valuable character, many of which could never be replaced, is, so far as its internal arrangements are concerned, absolutely without protection from fire. As a matter of fact there is no water at all in the building except what is supplied by one small tap, and such as occasionally leaks through the roof. The structure is contiguous to a number of small shops and sheds, and in the event of a conflagration would share the common ruin.

In the attic of the Langevin Block are stored the unused models relating to patents. They are of flimsy construction, and would prove highly dangerous should fire find its way to that part of the building. In the same edifice there lie unprotected, upon the floors of some of the offices occupied by the Department of the Interior, for lack of accommodation, original survey records representing an expenditure of some five or six millions of dollars. In the same department are other valuable papers, such as maps and documents relating to land patents, equally unprotected. In another quarter of the same building occupied by the Savings Bank Branch of the Post Office Department are ledgers, 1247 in number, containing 650,000 accounts of which 135,000 are active and show balances amounting to \$33,100,000. These books are more than ordinarily exposed to fire, and, as they contain the only authentic record of the depositors' accounts, their destruction would be irreparable.

In the Copyright Branch of the Department of Agriculture are to be found the records of all copyrights, the original certificates of the registration of trade marks, designs, and timber marks, and in the Patent Record Branch of the same department are stored the patent files to which are attached the plans, petitions, specifications and drawings in each case. These documents form a valuable collection and should be carefully guarded, yet no more insecure conditions prevail in any of the departments than here.

The papers belonging to the Records Branch of the Department of the Secretary of State are stored in the attic of the Eastern Block. That portion of the building is of a most inflammable character as evidenced by the rafters, laths and wood-work generally, and it is only adding to the danger to use it as a store-house. The undersigned submit for the consideration of the Government whether this wood-work, and that in the attics of the Langevin Block, should not be removed, and replaced by fire-proof material. They also deem the occasion opportune for providing an iron roof to the Eastern Block, similar to that now in course of erection over the Western Building.

## 3.—WHAT PAPERS OR RECORDS MIGHT BE DESTROYED, AND AFTER WHAT INTERVAL OF TIME.

With reference to the third branch of the inquiry, it being impossible to lay down any fixed rule which shall admit of general application, the undersigned suggest that a board of inspection composed of one or more experienced persons, if possible members of the public service, be appointed to visit the departments in turn, and to determine by detailed personal examination what papers, books, maps, or other documents might be destroyed forthwith. It is further suggested that each deputy head, be, *quoad* the inspection of his own department, a member of this board. The inspecting officers should also be charged with the duty of laying down some guiding principle for each department which should govern the periodical destruction of departmental papers in the future. At the conclusion of their examination in each department, the inspectors should submit their report to His Excellency the Governor General in Council, and if approved it might be given effect to at once.

The suggested addition of each deputy head to this board, so far as relates to his own department, is one which the undersigned feel would prove beneficial in the work of culling the records. In the registration office of one department alone there is a mass of over 447,000 letters, and the special knowledge of the various subjects possessed by the deputy head would be of great assistance in the course of the weeding process. Indeed it would be indispensable.

The undersigned frequently noticed in the course of their inquiry, quantities of surplus copies of departmental and other reports which take up very considerable room, and in the majority of cases are believed to be merely in the way. To destroy these indiscriminately would be unwise, as certain Government publications are now rare, and some impossible to procure. It occurred to them that it would be well for each deputy head to ascertain the number and nature of such books on hand in his department, sending a memorandum thereof to the Queen's Printer, who could in this way know exactly what spare copies of blue-books were in the possession of the Government. Those deemed of no use could be destroyed and the balance sent to the Queen's Printer to be kept in stock in the Printing Bureau. By such a scheme books useful but now inaccessible could be rescued from oblivion and valuable space gained for the departments.

With respect to records of a financial nature the undersigned are of opinion that the system of weeding which now prevails in certain departments, whether departmentally or under authority of the Governor in Council, should be continued. All vouchers, papers, and memoranda relating to receipts and expenditures might, as a rule, be destroyed at the end of ten years. For example, on the 1st January, 1898, the destruction might be commenced of the vouchers of accounts of the year 1887. The undersigned do not, however, recommend the application of this rule to ledgers, journals, cash books and the like, containing records of original entry.

While recommending the adoption of a limit of ten years in the case of vouchers, &c., they think it would be desirable that discretion be left to the inspectors,



whose appointment is hereinbefore suggested, as to whether destruction should not take place at more frequent intervals than ten years.

In the course of the examination of the files of documents submitted to them in various departments the undersigned could not fail to observe that a very appreciable proportion of the work of registering, docketing and filing is taken up with correspondence of little or no permanent value. Of correspondence of this class the major portion consists of inter-departmental notes, covering letters, memoranda, and the like. It occurs to the undersigned that it would tend to simplification, and at the same time avoid encumbering the records with surplusage, if steps were taken by the deputy heads individually, or in concert, to ascertain how far this class of correspondence might be limited in future. To illustrate the ephemeral character of much of the correspondence, the undersigned would point out that the Major General commanding the Militia states that probably not 5 per cent of the correspondence of that branch is worth preserving indefinitely.

#### 4.—GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE COMMISSIONERS.

Having thus given their best consideration to the whole subject of the care and management of the public records, and realizing the manifold inefficiencies of the present methods and the need of a radical change therein, the undersigned are unanimously of opinion that no reform can be permanent or effective which does not provide for concentration and unity of control. They accordingly recommend that the older and more valuable documents, and particularly those enumerated in Appendix A to this report, be brought together in one place and committed to the custody of one person, under whose control and supervision they should be classified and arranged. To this end they recommend the erection of a suitable fire-proof building to be known as the Record Office, which shall serve as a general repository for the archives above mentioned, where they could be convenient of access to students and other accredited persons, under rules to be laid down similar to those of the Public Record Office in England. It occurs to the undersigned that in the event of the erection of a building for the use of the Geological Survey Department a portion of it might be devoted to the purposes of the records, and thus a common meeting place afforded to persons interested in scientific and literary research. In this building also could be deposited all departmental papers over a certain age, to be fixed by the inspectors appointed to determine what papers should be destroyed. These inspectors should, at the same time, indicate the documents which, in addition to those enumerated in Appendix A, might advantageously be removed to the central bureau.

The undersigned feel that the details of this plan may safely be entrusted to those charged with carrying it into effect. They suggest, however, that while the older papers (which may be designated as the archives proper) should be united, the departmental records of later date might advantageously be kept separate for a time. For this purpose each department should be allotted in the general build-

ing such space as might be necessary. A clerk from each department might be detailed to assist in the original classification and arrangement of the papers sent from that department, which should be so disposed that any document would be readily available on requisition from the deputy head.

In the opinion of the undersigned the Minister of the Crown under whose supervision the Public Record Office is placed should be styled, as such, "The Keeper of the Records," and, following English precedent, the chief executive officer should be designated "The Deputy Keeper of the Records." To such deputy keeper power should be given to communicate with persons outside the public service for the purpose of obtaining material for the building up and maintaining the continuity of the Archives of Canada. This recommendation has been impressed on the undersigned by the fact of their having been informed that at the several posts of the Hudson's Bay Company there exists a series of notes, memoranda, and diaries relating to the early days of the Company, and containing much information which could not fail to be of interest to the student of Canadian history and that through lapse of time and other causes the older manuscripts are gradually disappearing. The undersigned feel that a collection of this nature, bearing on the early movements of the Indians, the rivalries of trading companies, the climatic conditions at various posts, and kindred subjects, should be preserved by some means for the Dominion. \*

In a previous part of this report allusion has been made to the wooden cupboards and shelving to be found in almost all the departments. The undersigned are of opinion that as speedily as possible these should be replaced by suitable receptacles constructed entirely of metal, such as are now employed in one or two instances in the departments with satisfactory results. In this connection the undersigned further suggest that for the economizing of room the whole of the wall-space in offices used for the storage of records be utilized for that purpose. This could be accomplished by extending the shelving the whole of the distance from the floor to the ceiling; the higher portions to be reached by means of light galleries, such as are now in use in the Department of Marine and Fisheries.

The undersigned are of opinion that an additional safe-guard would be found in the extension throughout the whole of the public departments of the system of electric lighting now in operation in the Privy Council Office.

The undersigned have observed that the work of the following departments: Public Works, Indian Affairs, Militia, Interior, Geological Survey, Post Office and Marine and Fisheries calls for the making of surveys, plans, drawings, maps and charts. There is apparently no system of interchange or co-operation between them in this regard, and it would appear that the scheme of a central bureau such as herein outlined would lend itself specially to security, accuracy, and economy in the administration of this feature of Government business. All the various records of surveys, plans, maps, charts, &c., now scattered throughout the various departments could be deposited in the Record Office where they would be readily accessible for reference or examination.

The advantages of a general place of deposit are so many and obvious that they do not require to be dwelt upon. The sole objection which can be urged



against this plan is the cost of its adoption, for there is no doubt that the erection of a suitable building, such as is contemplated by the undersigned, would necessitate the expenditure of a considerable sum of money. The undersigned, however, are of opinion that beyond the original outlay on the building, the administration of the central Record Office would entail no greater cost than is now incurred by the Government for the same object.

The Public Accounts show that there is yearly paid in salaries to the Dominion Archivist and his assistants the sum of \$3,570. To the Keeper of Records and his staff in salaries, \$4,400. Besides these amounts there was voted last year \$8,000 for the general purposes of the Archives; the Clerk of the Privy Council has \$1,000 for classification of old records; and there are several temporary clerks in other departments of the public service employed in sorting and arranging old papers. So that the Government pays at least \$17,000 a year, ostensibly for a service, the various branches of which, instead of co-operating with, tend to neutralize one another.

Under the system proposed by the undersigned, in addition to the paramount advantage of safe custody, the records would be disposed in a regular order, the plan of arrangement would be uniform, the number of officers would be reduced to the lowest point, and public convenience and economy would be equally consulted. Without such a building the records must remain as they are until another and more disastrous conflagration shall render further consideration of the subject unnecessary.

The undersigned, conceiving the scope of their inquiry to be limited to the Executive Departments, did not visit the Central Building. There is no reason to suppose, however, that the condition of affairs therein differs in any essential particular from that obtaining in the public offices. They, therefore, suggest for the consideration of the Government whether it might not be well to obtain from the Senate and House of Commons authority to examine into the safe-keeping of the Archives of Parliament.

The undersigned desire to acknowledge the assistance they have received from the various deputy heads and chiefs of branches throughout the service, whose co-operation has facilitated in no small degree the progress of this inquiry.

All of which is respectfully submitted,

J. M. COURTNEY,  
Deputy Minister of Finance.

J. L. McDOUGALL,  
Auditor-General.

JOSEPH POPE,  
Under-Secretary of State.

Ottawa, 26th November, 1897.





# APPENDICES TO REPORT

## APPENDIX A.

MEMORANDUM OF PAPERS WHICH, IN THE OPINION OF THE COMMISSIONERS, SHOULD BE TRANSFERRED TO THE CENTRAL RECORDS OFFICE, ON ITS ESTABLISHMENT.

(1.) Everything in the Archives Branch of the Department of Agriculture.

(2.) Everything in the Records Branch of the Department of the Secretary of State, other than departmental files and letter books of later date than 30th June, 1867, lodged there for convenience.

(3.) Everything in the Privy Council Office of date anterior to the 1st July, 1867.

(4.) Correspondence of the Provincial Secretary of Canada in the Department of Finance, or elsewhere.

(5.) Papers in the Militia Department, or elsewhere, having reference to the War of 1812 and the Rebellion of 1837.

(6.) Documents bearing upon the early history of the Rideau and Welland Canals, whether in the Department of Railways and Canals, or in the Department of the Interior, or elsewhere.

(7.) Documents in the Department of Justice, or elsewhere, relating to the risings in the North-west, and also those touching the Fenian Raids.

(8.) Bound manuscript volumes containing reports of Indian Commissioners at Albany and elsewhere dating from 1722, now in the Department of Indian Affairs, also the original surrenders from the various Indian tribes.

(9.) Papers in the Department of Marine and Fisheries relating to the Behring Sea seal fisheries and other international questions, as the subjects to which they relate are disposed of.

## APPENDIX B.

NOTES OF THE VISITS OF THE COMMISSIONERS TO THE PUBLIC  
DEPARTMENTS, 1897.

## RAILWAYS AND CANALS.

Tuesday, 23rd March, 1897.

Messrs. Courtney, McDougall, and Pope visited the Department of Railways and Canals this afternoon. The Chief Engineer's branch was first inspected and found to contain correspondence from 1872, ticketed and stored in file cabinets. In the opinion of the deputy head such of this correspondence as is older than ten years might be removed.

The Commissioners then visited an adjoining room containing canal statistics, which Mr. Schreiber thinks might be destroyed at the end of each year. They also visited the accountant's office, where are kept vouchers for three years ; also the general record room specially constructed for the purpose, with roof of glass and iron, but divided by wooden partitions and with wooden floors, which detract from its fire-proof character. The correspondence in this room goes back to 1848, and is well arranged. The deputy head considers a large proportion of it to be of no value, but in order to separate wheat from chaff he thinks careful examination necessary.

In the law clerk's room are to be found in convenient and accessible form, the leases, deeds, contracts, agreements, &c., relating to the Government railways and canals from the beginning to the present day. These leases number 12,697. Mr. Doull considers that none of these should be destroyed—though those older than twenty years might advantageously be removed to a general repository where they would be accessible. Mr. Courtney expressed the opinion that many of these papers, such for example, as the Duke of Wellington's despatches on the subject of the Rideau Canal, and also documents connected with the early history of the Welland Canal, might be found to possess much historic interest, apart from their business value.

In a room upstairs are the plans of railways, deposited under the Railway Act. Such of these as are over five years old might be removed to a general repository. In this room also are kept the various sworn returns made by different railway companies from which the railway report is made up. A similar room contains canal plans, which are much fewer in number and take up but little space.



Mr. McDougall drew attention to the ample accommodation in this department, and to the number of lofty and commodious rooms, contrasting in a marked manner with the cramped conditions which prevail in the Eastern Block.

In the attic are various old documents relating to accounts, which might advantageously be removed ; also a large number of blue-books, being an accumulation of reports of various departments—principally Public Works, which the Deputy Minister reports to be of no use. Mr. Pope suggested that these superfluous blue-books should be sent from each department to the Printing Bureau, and when there, a collection could be made of such as it is deemed expedient to keep, and the balance destroyed. In another room in the attic are stored the old Canadian Pacific Railway construction records, which might be removed, but not destroyed, as they are occasionally referred to. Also a large quantity of old maps in sheets, which might be distributed to the various country schools. Mr. Courtney drew attention to the fact that these papers were stored in a large number of wooden cupboards, and suggested that these inflammable receptacles should be replaced by steel cabinets, which are now being manufactured comparatively cheaply in the United States. Another room in the attic is used for the purpose of a lumber room, and contains large numbers of bound sessional papers and reports in tolerable order, but so crowded with wooden cases that the volumes are almost inaccessible. Above the attic again, in the Mackenzie Tower, are situated what are really the only fire-proof rooms in the department. They are filled with blue-books, old documents and vouchers in endless confusion for which disorder the late fire is partly accountable. The contents of these rooms should be sorted, classified and arranged, and a great deal that is obviously useless should be destroyed. The Deputy Minister, however, is of opinion that nothing should be destroyed without careful examination and a winnowing process.

On the whole the records of this department are in good condition, a result greatly facilitated by the abundance of room at its disposal.

## INLAND REVENUE.

Wednesday, 24th March, 1897.

This afternoon Messrs. Courtney, McDougall, and Pope visited the Inland Revenue Department and examined the records therein. The Accounts Branch was first visited. In the Long Room are kept the entry papers for the current year. These are filed in wooden cupboards and are destroyed at the end of three years—duplicates existing outside. The contingent accounts are kept for several years ; as also are the expenditure vouchers, which have never been destroyed. The seizure papers are also kept here. According to the Deputy Minister the latter should not be destroyed. In an adjoining room are kept the manufacturers' returns, which the Deputy thinks should be kept for six years. The Deputy considers five years long enough to keep expenditure vouchers, and also those re-

ling to weights and measures, but does not consider it would be safe to destroy manufacturers' returns. There are no historical returns in this department. It was represented that the laboratory in connection with this department adds considerably to the risk of fire. It is also at times offensive to those in the department by reason of the smell, and it is desirable that it should be removed to a separate building.

In the general correspondence room are kept the letters for the last three years in wooden file cabinets. The letter books are also there for the last four years. The Deputy is of opinion that no correspondence should be destroyed for at least ten years, and then only after careful revision. Mr. McDougall suggested that after ten years the departmental correspondence might be placed in a general record building, which the Deputy thought a good idea, provided the papers were readily accessible to the department.

In the Accounts Branch are large numbers of advice notes going back to the beginning of the department, and also a quantity of paid cancelled cheques, which it was considered might be destroyed after they were returned by the Audit Department. The papers respecting defalcations which are there for twenty odd years, it was thought inadvisable to destroy.

The basement rooms containing the older documents and stationery supplies, &c., were then visited. The entry papers, contingent accounts and vouchers of the various kinds alluded to above, relating to the earlier years of the department were found neatly stored in wooden cupboards of various kinds, in a systematic and methodical manner. Mr. Courtney drew attention to the inconvenience and added risk of fire caused by the number of wooden cupboards and suggested the advisability of replacing them by steel cabinets. Only a limited number of old blue-books were found in this department, none of them over ten years old. There is no lumber room; nor did the Commissioners see anything that was not classified in an orderly manner. In one of the basement rooms is all the correspondence of the department going back to 1870. In another, the various printed forms and other stationery required by the department.

The vault containing the stamps was then visited. In this vault is kept a large number of Inland Revenue stamps, actually costing some \$15,000 to produce, and possessing a representative value of millions. The walls and ceiling of this vault are brick, yet strange to say the floor is of wood; and the stamps rest upon a large number of shelves made of inch pine. The various divisions are also of this inflammable material. In the opinion of the Commissioners the wooden floor of this vault should give place to concrete and the soft wood shelving to iron or steel.

In conclusion the Commissioners found the records of this Department in good condition—there being no disorder and comparatively little material which is clearly useless.

As in the case of the Railway Department they were struck by the number and roominess of the various offices.



## CUSTOMS DEPARTMENT.

Tuesday, 30th March, 1897.

Messrs. Courtney, McDougall, and Pope visited the Customs Department this afternoon. This department, which was considerably disturbed by the recent fire in the West Block, is temporarily located in what is known as the Nagle Building, Wellington Street. The bulk of their papers, however, remain in the West Block. In company with the Commissioner of Customs their old quarters were visited. The papers of this department fall into three divisions: (1) Correspondence (including seizure records); (2) Statistics (imports and exports); and (3) Accounts. There are no historic records. In the correspondence room on the first floor in the West Block is the correspondence from 1889, including the letter-books for the last ten years in an adjoining vault. This correspondence is filed in wooden cabinets similar to those in other departments.

In the Accounts Branch on the same floor is another vault which contains all the account books of the Customs from 1849, and all those of the Inland Revenue from 1849 to 1867, also seizure reports from 1878.

In the basement are to be found all the correspondence from 1868, and the letter-books from 1844. Many of the latter are mildewed and evidently suffering from damp. This dampness is ascribed to the recent fire, but, whatever be the cause, the fact remains that these basement rooms are in the highest degree unwholesome, and unfit for the storing of valuable records. The Commissioners also observed some old newspaper files and other rubbish in this basement which might be destroyed. In the statistical rooms of this basement are the originals of the Trade and Navigation statements from 1852, from which the published returns are compiled—an immense number; also revenue accounts current going back to 1878. There are also a large number of boxes nailed up and containing old correspondence and other papers. There is nothing on any of these boxes to indicate their contents, the consequence being that these papers in their present state are quite unavailable for purposes of reference.

Entries for duty are now kept in the department for three years and then destroyed, duplicate entries for duty being kept at ports. These latter are destroyed every seven years and invoices every ten years. Mr. McDougald is of opinion that no correspondence should be destroyed. He favours the idea of a central record office, to which all customs records over a certain age (which need not be uniform) should be removed. He is of opinion that the year 1879, when the fiscal policy of the Government underwent a great change, would be a suitable division of time, though he considers much in his department ripe for removal after ten years. Mr. McDougald thinks that under no circumstances should books or documents anterior to Confederation (1867) remain in the department, though they should be readily accessible to him at all times.

In the basement are also the revenue accounts current going back to 1878. The accounts previous to that date were accidentally destroyed by fire. The officers of the department are of opinion that all these papers more than seven years old might be destroyed, as well as duplicate deposit receipts. The expendi-

ture vouchers which are referred to frequently should be preserved. Customs pay-lists might be destroyed, but cheques and counterfoils should be kept.

The Supply Branch which is also in the basement contains a large quantity of stationery forms, &c., also old circulars which do not seem to be of any use.

In conclusion the Commissioners are of opinion that the books and papers now in the basement of this department which are either suffering from damp, or so disposed as to be inaccessible should be removed at an early day, and after examination those which in the opinion of the Commissioner of Customs are of no value or interest should be destroyed. They also favour the substitution of steel file cases for the wooden receptacles at present in use.

## DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS.

Friday, 9th April, 1897.

The Commissioners visited the Department of Public Works this afternoon in company with the Deputy Minister, and inspected the records. This department which was one of the chief sufferers by the recent fire in the West Block is temporarily lodged in the Slater Block on Sparks Street.

For the purpose of records it may be considered as divided into three branches, the department proper, the Chief Engineer's Branch and that of the Chief Architect.

The department dates from the creation of the Department of Railways and Canals which occurred in the month of October, 1879, and possesses few papers or documents anterior to that date. The business of this department is divided into thirty-three subjects. In the general correspondence room are to be found the departmental files beginning in 1892, the previous ones having been destroyed by fire. With the exception of the plans in the Chief Engineer's Office there are no historical records. The correspondence room besides the departmental files contains also the registers dating from the 7th October, 1879. In the opinion of the Deputy Minister the bulk of this correspondence need not be kept longer than three years, or at the outside five, that is counting from the time in which the subject matter was finally disposed of.

In an adjoining room are to be found all the letter-books from the beginning of the department, that is to say, from 1879. These are intact, having escaped the fire. The deputy is of opinion that it would be well to retain these letter-books within easy reference.

The Accounts Branch was then visited. All the vouchers of this branch were destroyed by fire up to the year 1890. The accounts of this branch are divided into two heads—appropriation accounts and personal accounts. All the books were saved from the fire. As regards vouchers the accountant is of opinion that the pay-lists might be kept about ten years, also the accounts current, bills, cheques and progress estimates.

The Commissioners next visited the Chief Engineer's Branch. The correspondence of this branch is kept in a separate register, though much of it eventually finds its way into the general correspondence. That which remains in the branch is for the most part of little value. The Chief Engineer has charge of a large number of valuable plans of harbours, rivers, roads and bridges, going back in some instances as far as 1838. Many of these plans are of much interest and value, and it occurs to the Commissioners that they should be kept in greater security than at present. In the opinion of the Commissioners they should be kept in metallic cases with rollers, or in a fire-proof vault as they form the most valuable portion of the records of the Public Works Department.

The system in the Chief Architect's Branch is similar to that of the Chief Engineer's—they having their own correspondence, registers and letter-books. As in the other branch, the correspondence that remains permanently in the branch is of little use and might be destroyed, or at any rate removed from the department after three years.

The Law Branch of the department contains the contracts, deeds and leases from 1879 in three wooden cupboards. They number about 3,000 odd, and are at present in an exceedingly unsecure situation. These documents take up comparatively little space, and in the opinion of the deputy should remain in the department, as they are frequently referred to.

The great bulk of old reports, &c., belonging to this department was consumed in the fire, so the Commissioners observed comparatively little in the way of lumber. There is, however, a collection of documents, blue-books, &c., belonging to the Public Works Department in the Mackenzie Tower of the West Block, adjoining the Department of Railways and Canals. The Deputy Minister states that mingled with a great deal of useless matter in this collection are some interesting and valuable papers which should be rescued from their present position. The Commissioners saw this room on the occasion of their visit to the Department of Railways and Canals, and are of opinion that a careful examination of its contents should be made ; whatever is valuable removed therefrom, and what is clearly useless destroyed.

## DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC PRINTING AND STATIONERY.

Wednesday, 5th May, 1897.

This afternoon Messrs. Courtney, McDougall, and Pope visited the Department of Public Printing and Stationery and were received by the Deputy Minister who explained to them the system prevailing in the Printing Bureau. The documents belonging to this department may be classed in two divisions : (1) papers relating to the accounts, and (2) papers relating directly to the work of printing and binding.



This department dates back only to the year 1886, and has no accumulation of papers of historic interest. The correspondence of the department is practically that of the Deputy-Head and is so limited as not to call for any special remarks. With reference to the Accountant's Branch, the receipts, invoices, cheques, &c., after being received from the Auditor-General are kept for two or three years, and are then sent down stairs to the basement where they are stored in boxes. The same rule is observed with respect to the jackets and their inclosures.

The rooms in the Printing Bureau are large and commodious with a minimum of woodwork, consequently the risk of fire (excepting in the attic) is very slight.

The Commissioners could not help remarking upon the anomaly afforded by the fact that this department whose documentary records are few in number and of comparatively little lasting value should occupy practically a fire-proof building, while many of the other departments containing most valuable papers dwell in the greatest insecurity.

As to destruction of papers the Queen's Printer is of opinion that all vouchers, accounts, cheques, &c., might be destroyed after six years, and that the jackets and their contents might be destroyed after four years. He did not see any advantage in preserving indefinitely documents which appear to serve no other purpose than that of facilitating the advocacy of claims upon the Government. Mr. McDougall, however, pointed out that it was worthy of consideration whether the wholesale destruction of these vouchers after a comparatively short space of time might not in suits in the Exchequer Court prove more unfavourable to the Government than their preservation.

The Queen's Printer has one room under the Finance Department in the East Block where are stored the old files of the Canada "Gazette." It appears to the Commissioners that these might be removed to the Printing Bureau where there is plenty of room for them.

Dr. Dawson is strongly of the opinion that a central Bureau of Records should be established by the Government, to which all departmental papers and records deemed worthy of preservation should after a certain age be removed. He stated that some years ago he formulated a scheme to this effect in writing to the then Secretary of State, Dr. Montague, and was good enough to promise that he would supply the Commissioners with a copy of this document.

In regard to the advisability of providing metal receptacles for valuable papers, Dr. Dawson expressed himself in favour of their adoption, throughout the service, though the comparative unimportance of the papers in his department renders it a question of secondary consideration for him.

The Commission then visited the basement of the building which appears to be built altogether of brick and concrete. It is large, airy and comparatively light. In one vault in this basement are kept the stones from which are printed the maps of the Geological Survey, in another the stereotype plates of the statutes, and other books. These stereotypes are arranged in an orderly manner on commodious wooden shelves. The only suggestion with respect to their safe-keeping that the Commissioners have to offer is that the shelving should be of metal.

In the basement also are a number of surplus reports, &c., particularly a large number of Professor Robertson's Evidence before the Committee on Agriculture and Colonization, which might be destroyed.

In the attic of the Printing Bureau are a large supply of blue-books, and in this connection the Queen's Printer made a suggestion which strikes the Commissioners as possessing much practical merit. Dr. Dawson points out that there are in the several departments a large number of surplus copies of various departmental reports, which, as regards the department in which they are deposited, are merely in the way. Yet, as he observes, it would not do for a Deputy Minister to destroy his surplus stock of blue-books merely because he does not want them, for it is a fact that certain departmental and other reports issued by the Canadian Government are now rare, some of them being almost impossible to procure. Dr. Dawson, therefore, thinks that it would be well for each deputy head to ascertain and forward him a memorandum showing approximately, the number of surplus blue-books he has on hand. The Queen's Printer would then combine and tabulate these reports and thus ascertain exactly what spare copies of blue-books were in the possession of the Government. He could then notify each department to destroy what he considered unnecessary to keep, and send the balance to him to be kept in the Printing Bureau. This scheme, which in fact constitutes the office of Queen's Printer as a clearing house for blue-books, commends itself to the Commissioners:

The Commissioners observed no lumber-room, or heterogeneous collection of rubbish in this department.

## DEPARTMENT OF THE GEOLOGICAL SURVEY.

Tuesday, 11th May, 1897.

Messrs. Courtney, McDougall, and Pope visited the Geological Survey this afternoon, and in company with Dr. Geo. M. Dawson, the Deputy Head, made an examination of the department. Almost everything in this department is of value. Putting aside the Museum, as not coming within the scope of their inquiries, the attention of the Commissioners was drawn to a very large number of original manuscripts, maps, plans, plots of survey and field books, going back more than half a century. In one room are to be found plans of value to the number of 16,000, kept in wooden drawers. The larger correspondence of the department which is equally insecure contains many communications from distinguished geologists and scientific men of repute. This correspondence which goes back to 1878 the Commissioners regard as peculiarly interesting and valuable.

The letter-books of this department go back to 1869, previous to which the survey was conducted by Sir William Logan much as a private institution. The correspondence of the various branches is kept distinct. The general correspondence of the department includes that of the Director and Deputy Head to which reference has been made. The Mining and Statistical Branch, the Palæon-

tological Branch, the Botanical Branch and the Chemical Branch, each have their own system. The Commissioners, however, are disposed to regard the correspondence of the different branches as of comparatively minor importance.

In the Accountant's Branch are deposited the cheques, accounts, vouchers, &c., going back to 1878, and also the letter-books which ascend to 1865.

The paramount idea which was forced upon the Commissioners during this visit is the ever-present risk and almost certain danger of fire. Not only is there an entire absence of concrete floors, but the building appears to be a mere shell, its numerous wooden partitions and receptacles for documents adding to its insecurity. This building is joined to a collection of small shops and sheds, and in the event of fire occurring in any of these could hardly avoid sharing in the common ruin. Certain of the scientific work of the department calls for the use of small furnaces, while in more than one room in the basement are to be observed coal stoves necessitated by the dampness of the place. Pipes for these stoves, in one case at any rate, pass through wooden partitions. Besides this there is no system of water in the building, in fact no water at all beyond one small tap which is over a sink. There is no hose, no hydrant, in fact, no precaution whatever against fire.

The Statistical and Mining Branch is situated on the third flat or rather over the adjoining shop, as it is outside of the geological building proper. Here are kept many valuable specimens and mining records, in a room where the floor is sinking and the roof leaking.

What has been said with regard to the danger from fire to which the documents are exposed applies with equal force to the Museum, where there are many types which could never be replaced. The library on the first floor contains upwards of 11,000 books, most of them technical and scientific works running in series. These are crowded in dark corners difficult of access and equally exposed to the constant danger of fire, which threatens the whole building. In the Herbarium adjoining are 60,000 sheets containing specimens of the flora of Canada. These are kept in wooden cabinets dispersed through passages, there being not sufficient room for them in the narrow space allotted to Professor Macoun.

The Commission next visited the cellar where is kept the supply of departmental reports. The idea suggested itself to the Commissioners that these might be removed to the Printing Bureau and drawn on from time to time. In the cellar also there are many mineral and geological specimens of various kinds.

The assay room containing a small furnace was also visited, as also were the yard and sheds, which are filled with reports and overflow from the department. There is in the basement of the building a carpenter's shop, which in the opinion of the Commissioners cannot but add to the general insecurity.

In conclusion, the Commissioners were profoundly impressed by the urgent necessity for the adoption of prompt and effective measures to minimize the risk of fire to which the valuable contents of this department are constantly exposed, and also by the inadequacy of space and of general facilities necessary to the proper conduct of this highly important branch of the public service.



## DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE.

Thursday, 13th May, 1897.

The Commissioners visited the Department of Justice this afternoon and were received by the Deputy Minister, who explained at the outset that the records of his department fall into three divisions, viz. : The Registry Branch, the Docket Branch and the Penitentiary Branch.

In the Registry Branch are kept all correspondence connected with opinions given and cases gone into before litigation, also the letter-books connected with such correspondence, and the receipts and vouchers relating to disbursements in payment of judges and administration of the Government in the North-west Territories. Here also are kept those files relating to petitions for clemency and remission of sentences of convicts in cases where the matter is still pending, (when these cases are finally disposed of either by remission or expiry of sentence, the files go to the Department of the Secretary of State) also all letter-books relating to that branch from 1867, and files from 1889. The files between 1882 and 1889 are in the corridors in wooden cabinets, and prior to 1889 they are in the basement. Vouchers for money paid by the department for the last ten years are kept in the department. Previous to 1887 they are in the Finance Department.

The correspondence of this department contains a good deal having reference to the first and second rebellion of Louis Riel and also the Fenian Raids which may be of historic interest.

The files of this department, more than fifteen years old, are very rarely asked for and are judged to be of little value, but the Deputy Minister would not recommend any wholesale destruction of papers of any age until the same have been carefully gone over.

Mr. Newcombe favours the idea of a central bureau to which all papers over ten years old might be transferred. The Auditor General here suggested the advisability of ascertaining from each Deputy Minister the amount of space his department would be likely to require in the central bureau.

The Docket Branch was next visited. This branch comprises files relating to matters in litigation and suit papers, and correspondence with agents. All copies of papers in respect of litigation conducted by the department are kept in the Docket Branch. Here are letter-books from 1859. The files are kept in wooden drawers. Mr. Blackadar who is in charge of this branch thinks it would be advisable to exercise great care in regard to the destruction of these papers. The deputy concurs in the view that the docket might be culled every ten years. Many of the papers in the Justice Department are not originals but copies of letters written to the various departments and law agents.

In the Penitentiary Branch the files from 1892 are kept in Mr. Stewart's room, and those previous to 1892 are kept in rooms in the basement. The only penitentiary correspondence which it is considered might be destroyed are those relating to the Halifax and St. John Penitentiaries and Rockwood Asylum. Mr. Stewart does not think it advisable to destroy any vouchers. In the basement

are two rooms containing old papers to which reference has been had, and also fifty sets of statutes and some valuable files of the Canada "Gazette." There is also in the basement a vault filled with old newspapers which in the opinion of the Commissioners ought to be destroyed. There do not seem to be any correspondence or other papers beyond a few letter-books in this department prior to Confederation.

### THE AUDITOR-GENERAL'S OFFICE.

Friday, 14th May, 1897.

The Commissioners visited the office of the Auditor-General this afternoon. This office may be considered as divided into three branches: the Accountant's Branch, the Expenditure Branch and the Revenue Branch. Speaking generally the vouchers are returned to the department from which they emanate after two years, with the exception of those belonging to the Justice, Public Works and Railways and Canals which have not received theirs. The Auditor-General is of opinion that after there is no further probability of their being required by the Public Accounts Committee all these vouchers ought to be returned.

In the basement of this office are lodged all triplicate deposit receipts since 1878. The Auditor-General thinks that these receipts might be destroyed after three years. There are also down stairs the records of application for certificates for payment since 1878, also a mass of old Government bonds and coupons. The Auditor-General thinks that these certificates of payment might be destroyed after six or seven years, as well as a quantity of Revising Officers' accounts and papers connected with the Canada Temperance Act. All these are in one room down stairs. In another room down stairs are certain old papers connected with various Assistant Receivers General offices, also a large number of manuscript statements of accounts for the various departments used in making up the Auditor-General's reports. In this room is also a large number of accounts belonging to Public Works Department and Marine Department, also a quantity of books in connection with bank accounts, also books connected with letters of credit, also stubs of certificates. In this room is a fire place which is completely covered with wooden shelves, and papers. It is suggested that this may be a source of danger from fire, as it is very possible that sparks might descend through the flue. It appears to the Commissioners that this chimney should be closed up. All the old letter-books are kept in this room.

The Commissioners then visited the Revenue Branch of this department which is under the supervision of Mr. Gorman, in whose office are correspondence and vouchers in connection with the revenue for the past two years, in wooden shelves and cabinets. Such of these papers as the office will not accommodate are placed in wooden cabinets in the corridors.

In the Accountant's Branch under the supervision of Mr. Sutherland are all correspondence and applications for cash certificates, also papers connected with letters of credit and the ledgers both of revenue and expenditure.

In the room of Mr. Hayter who is the chief of the Expenditure Branch are the expenditure vouchers connected with the Public Works and Railways and Canals Department. In the office on the third flat are various rooms, one containing the Savings Banks cheques in wooden cabinets. These go back to 1890, and number 72,000. In another room on this flat are the Indian vouchers belonging to Consolidated Fund for the past three years. In another are the Mounted Police vouchers and those relating to the Interior. In another are the Marine and Trade and Commerce expenditure accounts for the past three years. In another are the accounts relating to Civil Government Contingencies, Militia, Agriculture and Legislation. In the corridors adjoining these rooms are several wooden cupboards, in which the overflow of this department is deposited.

#### FINANCE DEPARTMENT.

Wednesday, 19th May, 1897.

This afternoon the Commissioners inspected the Finance Department. The rooms in the basement, 11 in number, were first visited. The following is a memorandum of their contents :—

Room No. 1 contains triplicate bank receipts, 1848-78 ; orders for warrants, 1848-78. All of these papers previous to Confederation Mr. Dickieson thinks might be destroyed. There are also in this room cash certificates, Audit Office, from 1878, and a mass of blue-books, including bound volumes of the Canada Gazette before Confederation.

Room No. 2 contains Public Works vouchers belonging to the year 1875 or thereabouts sent over for audit, also vouchers belonging to the Department of Justice marked "Criminal Justice, 1862" and thereabouts, and papers relating to the Dawson Route. There are also duplicate warrants anterior to 1878, all of which might be destroyed. Old letters belonging to the Contingencies Branch, also contingencies papers prior to 1878, all these papers might also be destroyed, including old ledgers which were kept before the present audit system. There are also in this room some old ledgers belonging to the Department of the Interior.

Room No. 3 contains old papers belonging to the various departments, as they came from Quebec in 1865 ; many of these papers appear to belong to the Department of Justice, also Militia vouchers. There are also in this room papers relating to money orders and stubs of cheque-books prior to 1884, also a mass of departmental blue-books and old ledgers from Quebec.

Room No. 4 contains old duplicate warrants from 1823-48. These could all be destroyed, with the understanding which applies to everything else, that they



should first be carefully examined to see if they do not contain something of material or historic value. In this room also is a quantity of Militia papers before 1840, also old correspondence of the Government prior to Confederation ; these papers should be carefully gone over by some competent person. Also papers relating to the Labour Commission in 1892.

Room No. 5 contains duplicate and triplicate books of account, also old blue-books, also a quantity of papers relating to insurance, which latter are recommended for destruction.

Room No. 6 contains papers relating to the Public Works and particularly to the Dawson Route.

Room No. 7 contains old papers relating to Civil Government contingencies before Confederation, also ledgers and journals since 1864. Mr. Dickieson observes that he would not recommend the destruction of any of these. In this room are also a quantity of stock-books which should not be destroyed, also cupboards containing blue-books.

Room No. 8 contains papers before Confederation including correspondence belonging to the Provincial Secretary's office and other departments which should be carefully examined, also papers relating to the Contingencies Branch and superannuation.

Room No. 9 contains correspondence subsequent to Confederation but previous to 1893, also letter-books and papers belonging to the Inspector General's Office, 1841-60, also correspondence with the London agents, 1878 or thereabouts, old Treasury Board minute-books, also reports to council, also old letter-books from the Receiver General, also Intercolonial Railway vouchers which could be destroyed, also a large number of manuscripts used in making up accounts and estimates, all of which might be got rid of.

Room No. 10 contains cheques, vouchers and papers relating to Savings Banks to date. Mr. Anderson would not recommend the destruction of any of these papers, except such as may be in duplicate.

Room No. 11 contains a large number of Sessional Papers, also volumes of the Seigniorial Cadastres, as well as a quantity of paid dividend cheques. There are also a number of currency registers and old newspapers which, Mr. Courtney thinks, might be destroyed. There is also in this room a supply of budget speeches, estimates and blue-books of various kinds which should be carefully gone over.

In Mr. Toller's branch there are in his principal vault all the books relating to currency, and all the good bills. In the second vault are the cancelled bills. In cabinets in his office are old weekly returns from Assistant Receivers General ; these should be kept for two years and the balance destroyed. In Mr. Garland's room, which is the library of reference, are a number of sworn returns from the banks, which should not be destroyed.

In Miss Hutcheson's room is the correspondence in two divisions. From 1883-91 it is filed on the folding system, and from 1892 to date it is filed in cabi-

nets on the system of flat files. There are also in this room a quantity of minute-books and letter-books.

In Mr. Treadwell's room is a portion of the correspondence and letter-books of the Finance Department from 1878 to date. In Mr. Foster's room are the Treasury Board papers.

## DEPARTMENT OF THE SECRETARY OF STATE.

Friday, 21st May, 1897.

This afternoon the Commissioners visited the Department of the Secretary of State. This department is divided into three branches, the Correspondence Branch, the Registrar's Branch, and the Records Branch.

### CORRESPONDENCE BRANCH.

In the Correspondence Branch are kept the departmental files for the current year and the two previous years. The files of an earlier date are sent to the Records Branch. All the correspondence of this department is entered in one register under one series of numbers, with the exception of papers relating to remission of sentences of convicts, which are kept in a separate register.

### REGISTRAR'S BRANCH.

The Registrar's Branch, which is the office of the Registrar General of Canada, was then visited. The work of this branch embraces the engrossing of all official documents such as commissions to lieutenant-governors, ministers of the Crown, judges of all courts, Queen's counsel, customs and inland revenue officers *et al.* These commissions are principally engrossed on parchment. Besides this there is the engrossing on paper, such as charters of incorporation, agreements and contracts, leases, special land grants, proclamations, &c. All documents so engrossed having been signed and sealed, are registered in the branch.

In addition to the engrossing and recording of these there are other documents registered and filed in this branch, such as deeds and leases of land to the Crown for railway and canal purposes, post office, customs and lighthouse sites, also writs of election and public officers' bonds. The latter are filed in this branch. They go back to the year 1841. The Commissioners are of opinion that a large number of these must be useless, and might safely be destroyed. There are also on file all proclamations issued under the Great Seal dating back to 1763.

### RECORDS BRANCH.

The existence of the Records Branch dates from the year 1875, when a mass of public documents, which had long lain in the old Government House at Montreal, was brought to Ottawa and placed in this department. This nucleus has grown

to very considerable proportions. The Commissioners, however, strongly deprecate the relegation of valuable papers of this class to the attic where this branch is situated. Many of the older papers are lying under the eaves of the building in an almost inaccessible condition while the light shafts greatly increase the danger in case of fire. The difficulty of access to most of these rooms was specially noted and the impossibility of reaching them in case of fire commented upon. The Commissioners were struck by the inflammable character of the whole place, as evidenced by the appearance of the rafters, laths and wood-work generally.

Of all the places visited by the Commissioners with the exception, perhaps, of the Geological Survey, the danger from fire is greatest here.

The top or fourth storey contains principally duplicate volumes, bound and unbound, of various kinds—some of the latter might be destroyed or removed to the Queen's Printer's Office as previously indicated. This is specially true of a large number (several thousand copies) of the report of the Militia Department of 1885, which merely take up room. There are also a number of papers relating to elections under the Canada Temperance Act, consisting of ballots, returning officers' returns, &c., which unquestionably might be destroyed.

On the third flat are several rooms, as follows :—

(1.) Containing all the departmental correspondence of the department proper from its constitution in 1867 to 1894—the three subsequent years being as above stated in the Correspondence Branch—also the departmental registers for that period. In this room also are the correspondence files and registers of the old Department of the Secretary of State for the Provinces, which was merged in the Department of the Secretary of State of Canada in 1867. All these papers are in good order and readily accessible.

In an adjoining room are the correspondence of the Provincial Secretary of Lower Canada from 1841 to 1867 with registers, indexes and letter-books, also correspondence of the Provincial Secretary of Upper Canada from 1841 to 1867, with registers, indexes and letter-books. These are all carefully arranged in wooden cupboards.

In the room occupied by Mr. Audet, the clerk in charge of the records, are various historical documents of interest and value dating from 1762 to 1841, also a number of blue-books relating to Canada, and also the High Commissioner's papers from 1880 to 1884.

In another room are a number of original manuscripts of the period from 1764 to 1840 relating to land grants, marriage bonds, &c. These papers are in process of arrangement. In addition to these are various collections of printed documents, early journals of the House of Assembly of Lower Canada from 1792 to 1838, and many other interesting documents, the existence of which in the archives of the Government is not generally known. The Commissioners are of opinion that the records of this branch should not be allowed to remain in the dangerous locality in which they are situated.



## CIVIL SERVICE BOARD.

During the inspection of this department a visit was paid to the office of the Secretary of the Board of Civil Service Examiners, who is a first-class clerk in the Department of the Secretary of State. From Mr. Waters it was learned that the civil service examination papers are kept at the examiners' houses. Mr. Waters is of opinion that these papers might be destroyed after six years.

## DEPARTMENT OF MARINE AND FISHERIES.

Tuesday, 5th October, 1897.

The Commissioners this afternoon resumed their inquiry into the state of the departmental records, which had been interrupted for some months, by paying a visit to the Department of Marine and Fisheries.

This department may be considered as having two divisions, Marine and Fisheries, the former subdivided into the correspondence branch, the engineer's branch and the accountant's branch. In the record room of the Marine correspondence branch are to be found stored in neat box-drawers, under the system of flat filing, the correspondence since 1887. Respecting the older letters the Commissioners were informed that those relating to the period between 1867 and 1881 were destroyed by the fire which visited the West Block last winter. Those from 1881 to 1886 were in part saved, but for want of room are remaining in parcels in the corridors. Documents relating to Marine prior to the organisation of the department in 1867, originally belonging to the Trinity House, Quebec, are lodged with the Harbour Commissioners of that city. Those of the Trinity House, Montreal, were brought up to Ottawa on the abolition of that institution, and were totally consumed in the conflagration of February, 1897.

The correspondence of the Marine Branch is compact and well arranged, the box-drawers being carried up to the ceiling. Access is had to the higher divisions by a fixed ladder and gallery running the whole extent of one side of the record room, an arrangement which struck the Commissioners as being a particularly convenient one, in tending to economize room. There is in this department the same inadequate protection against fire which the Commissioners have noticed elsewhere. The metal roof now being erected over the West Block will no doubt lessen the danger from without, but the wooden floors, cabinets and shelving are still as inflammable as before, if unfortunately fire started from within.

All contracts for the purchase of lighthouse sites and also for buoys service are filed in a vault. These contracts go back ten or twelve years.

The Deputy Minister drew the attention of the Commissioners to the advisability of having electric light substituted for the present system of lighting by gas. There is no doubt that such a change would diminish the risk of fire.

Mr. Gourdeau favours the establishment of a central bureau to which the departmental records might be transferred periodically, and where they would be at all times accessible. With regard to the destruction of old documents, he is of opinion that much of his correspondence need not be kept longer than ten years, but in no case would he advise the wholesale destruction of any papers without careful examination.

The Engineer's Branch was next visited. There is nothing in this branch prior to 1867. Before that date all lights were under the Trinity Houses of Quebec and Montreal, and most of the old plans were deposited in the Railway Department. There are here a number of charts, plans and specifications of light-houses, buoys, fish-hatcheries, &c.

The Chief Engineer drew the attention of the Commissioners to the fact that owing to the absence of any system of interchange or co-operation between the departments much labour is unnecessarily expended. He cited by way of example the making of plans of hydrographic surveys and charts in connection with the work of his branch, and pointed out that the Marine Department might be called upon to make a survey of a harbour or plans of a pier, when the record of such survey or plan may be lying in the Department of Public Works or Railways, or, it may be, in both departments. In fact this has not infrequently happened, and it must continue to recur until some system is devised whereby each department will be in a position to know exactly what plans, charts and maps of a common interest and value are possessed by the other. The scheme of a central depository is specially adapted to meet this case, and the Commissioners recommend that the plans of hydrographic surveys and drawings of lighthouses, &c., now in the Marine Department, together with those of similar nature belonging to the Department of Railways and Canals, Public Works, Interior, Geological Survey and others, be deposited in some central place where they may be readily accessible to all departments of the Government.

The Accountant's Branch was next visited. The Commissioners were informed that all accounts, vouchers, cheques, &c., previous to 1895-96 had been destroyed in the fire of last winter. The vouchers from the latter date were saved. The accountant is of opinion that ten years is long enough to keep the vouchers of his branch.

The Fishery Branch was next visited. The general correspondence of this branch exists from 1889, and is filed as in the Marine Department, with the exception of the Behring Sea papers which are kept separately. The Commissioners would draw attention to the great value and importance of these Behring Sea papers which are of an international character. They are aware that a large number of these documents have already been printed, but they understand that many of the Canadian minutes of Council upon the subject, which practically contain the Canadian side of the case, have never seen the light. It is in their judgment highly important that when occasion for their instant use has passed away, these papers, and others of like character relating to the Newfoundland bait question and various phases of the fishery negotiations, be added to the archives of the country.

In the lumber room of the Fisheries Department are a number of old papers going back to 1854, at the time when the Crown Lands Department administered the fisheries. There are two lumber rooms belonging to this department containing a supply of blue-books, stubs of cheques and cheque-books, fishery bounty cheques, &c. The deputy concurs in the suggestion that the Queen's Printer should take over his surplus of blue-books. In these lumber rooms were observed a number of boxes containing the Behring Sea papers, which in the opinion of the Commissioners should be in a safer place. They think that a great quantity of material in the lumber rooms may be advantageously removed to make room for the stationery now piled in the corridors up stairs.

### POST OFFICE DEPARTMENT.

Wednesday, 6th October, 1897.

In company with the Deputy Postmaster General and the Secretary, Messrs. Courtney and Pope inspected the records of the Post Office Department this afternoon.

The various branches of this department were visited in order, beginning with the Secretary's Branch.

The records of this department go no farther back than 1851. Previous to that date the Post Office was managed directly by the Imperial Government, in whose possession are all the older papers. The correspondence records in the Secretary's Branch are divided into four classes :

- (1.) General letters—from the public ;
- (2.) Letters from foreign post offices—international in character. In filing these are further subdivided into (a) All English letters ; (b) Letters from United States ; (c) Letters from other foreign countries.
- (3.) Reports and special returns from inspectors ;
- (4.) Returns from postmasters.

With the exception of inspectors' returns none of this correspondence is destroyed—the older portions now being down stairs in the basement. Mr. LeSueur expressed the opinion that much of the correspondence and many of the returns might be burnt. He would destroy the statistical returns annually and also the solvency returns.

The security bonds of this service are kept in this department, though the statute provides they should be recorded and filed in the office of the Registrar General. Mr. LeSueur thinks the old bonds might be destroyed two years after they have expired.

The basement was next visited. There the postal stores are kept, which do not call for any special remark, except that the clerk in charge reports he is much



hampered for room. There are two vaults in this basement, in one of which are kept the postal cards—a million cards are kept on hand—and in another the postage stamps, amounting in value to \$1,000,000.

#### MAIL SERVICE BRANCH.

In the contract room are kept the papers relating to mail contracts, the tenders for which are kept in one cupboard, and the contracts in another. Under the authority of an Order in Council these documents are destroyed after eight years.

#### THE ACCOUNTANT'S BRANCH.

The papers of this branch, consist of postmasters' accounts, receipts and cheques, most of which are kept down stairs, and are periodically destroyed under authority of the Order in Council above quoted.

#### DEAD LETTER BRANCH.

The records of this branch are kept in the vault and go back to the year 1841. The main room of this branch possesses very limited accommodation—everything being much crowded.

#### THE SAVINGS BANK BRANCH.

This branch possesses a separate system of correspondence which is destroyed every three years, as also are old pass-books, under the authority of the Order in Council of 5th July, 1890, mentioned above. Withdrawal applications, cheques, &c., are also periodically destroyed. The most valuable records of this branch, and, indeed, some of the most valuable in the whole service are the ledgers, of which there are at present 1,247. These ledgers contain 650,000 accounts, and constitute the only authentic record of the various sums received from and repaid to depositors and of the balance—now \$33,100,000—due by the Government and to be claimed from it. Depositors' accounts with the Savings Bank are exclusively kept in these ledgers, and any loss or injury therefore, to these books would be a grievous calamity; yet no special attempt apparently is made to protect them from fire. Indeed the overcrowded state of this branch renders it more than ordinarily exposed to this risk. Many documents from lack of sufficient shelving are piled in heaps on the floor. The mode of providing gas light is another source of danger. It is supplied by means of small half-inch pipes reaching down from the lofty ceilings to within a few inches of the desks. There have been occasions when from a defective pipe, or an imperfectly turned key, so much gas has escaped during the night that the clerks could not with safety resume their duties on the following morning until the rooms had been purified. The remedy for this danger would be the introduction of the electric light, a change which would be a great boon to the staff of the Savings Bank, who have during the hot months of summer to perform much night-duty in these crowded rooms.

The Commissioners are of opinion that if the Savings Bank Branch continues to occupy its present quarters, it ought to be provided with a large fire-proof vault in which could be placed the annual summaries of depositors' accounts, the daily schedules of deposits and withdrawals for the current year, and the unposted accounts—these being the documents from which the balance due to each depositor could be established were the ledgers destroyed. The Commissioners are informed that there is unoccupied space in the lower basement along the whole corridor on the side fronting on Wellington Street for a series of such vaults and that their construction would not injure the building in the least, but would be a great relief to all departments needing them.

The Commissioners desire to draw attention to the dangerous practice of using the corridors for storage space. The mass of documents—some loose, some in bags, some in boxes and wicker baskets—all inflammable material—that now lines the upper corridors, or is crowded into the open space of the basement is a constant source of danger.

The Commissioners are of opinion that in this, as in the other departments of the Langevin Block, there is much waste of room. This is particularly noticeable in the Savings Bank ledger room, which is a front room, and should not be used as a storage room for books and papers. In any case the capacity of the room is not utilized, as it might be by carrying up the shelves, cupboards, &c., and running a light iron gallery round the walls.

On the third flat is situated the Money Order Branch. The records of this branch consist of money orders, and many accounts, which are destroyed every ten years. Here again the Commissioners are of opinion that there is no occasion to store such documents in a front room, but if they are stored there the space should be utilized to better advantage.

In conclusion the Commissioners would observe that the unsecure conditions, which they have remarked throughout the departments are strikingly exemplified in this building. The quantity of wooden shelving, wooden flooring, cupboards, &c., everywhere almost destroys the advantages of the fire-proof walls which inclose them; while the crowded state of the departments adds to the general insecurity.

## DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE.

Thursday, 7th October, 1897.

Messrs. Courtney and Pope visited the Department of Agriculture this afternoon, and in company with the Deputy Minister made the usual inspection, beginning with the main branch, the papers of which are now confined principally to the subject of quarantine, both general and cattle. Each branch of this department possesses its own system of correspondence with separate registers and series of numbers; an arrangement which does not strike the Commissioners as

being calculated to facilitate that direct and immediate supervision which a deputy-head should exercise.

The correspondence in the main branch goes back to the year 1865 as do the letter-books. This branch formerly dealt with immigration matters and still retains the papers relating to that subject, though immigration is now under the control of the Minister of the Interior ; this arrangement struck the Commissioners as being rather anomalous. The correspondence is pigeon-holed in a vault off the record room and is compact and well arranged.

In the Census and Statistical Branch the correspondence runs from the year 1889 as also do the letter-books. The statistical working room is much lumbered with old year-books and other publications, many of which, in the opinion of the Commissioners, might advantageously be deposited with the Queen's Printer.

In the Copyright Branch are registered (1) all copyrights since 1841, (2) Trade-marks since August, 1862, (3) designs since 1868 and (4) Timber-marks since 1870. One copy of each book copyrighted is of record in this office, as also are the original certificates of registrations of trade-marks, designs, &c., going back to the years indicated above. For these valuable documents there exists no protection whatever against fire. The books are in wooden cases ; the certificates are bound in large registers lying on wooden desks, and close by in wooden cupboards is the correspondence from 1862 dealing with these various subjects. Mr. Jackson informed the Commissioners that he had been promised a vault in which to store these valuable records, but that no steps had ever been taken to carry this promise out. The attention of the Commissioners was drawn by the Deputy Minister to the fact that the insecurity of these valuable papers was increased by the want of a division between the correspondence room of the department and the copyright room, which are all in one. Mr. Jackson urges that the whole room be placed at the disposal of the Copyrights Branch, but if that be not feasible, that the two should be divided by an asbestos partition.

The Accounts Branch was next reached. Here are kept all vouchers, &c., for two years, after which they are destroyed. The accountant thinks that everything of this kind might be burned at the end of five years, except the books. These are in the basement and go back to 1867.

The Commissioners next visited the Patents Branch, in one of the rooms of which are kept in wooden cabinets, the Caveats and Assignments since 1867. Mr. Lynch would not fix any date for the destruction of these documents, which, he thinks, should be preserved indefinitely. In the Patent Record room are the Patent files which go back to the year 1839 ; attached to these files are the plans, petitions, specifications and drawings in each case, which, as regards the two latter, are duplicates of those attached to the patent issued to the patentee ; this is one of the most valuable collection of papers in the public service and should be carefully guarded, yet they are kept under conditions of the greatest insecurity ; everything is of wood or paper, and the arrangement of the shelving precludes the hope that in case of fire the papers could be removed. Upwards of 60,000 patents have been issued, the sole record of which exists in this room ; here also are the books containing the exemplifica-



tions of patents. The average issue of patents is 400 a month. In this room the system of upward extension of file cabinets reached by light iron galleries would be very advantageous. In the correspondence room of this branch are recorded with the general correspondence, all applications for patents, applications when granted passing to the record room ; when refused they are filed with the correspondence. Mr. Lynch, the clerk in charge, thinks that this general correspondence need not be kept longer than ten years except in the case of rejected applications which should be preserved indefinitely.

The models are stored in the third flat. The danger attendant thereon is dwelt upon by the Commissioners in their report on the office of the Comptroller of the North-west Mounted Police.

In the basement are kept the returns of the census enumerators from 1851. Inasmuch as these returns are in print, the Commissioners do not see the advantage of keeping the original manuscripts indefinitely. Those of the last census should be preserved and possibly those of 1881, but it strikes the Commissioners that the census returns for the years 1851, 1861 and 1871 might be destroyed. There are also in this basement a number of reports of the archivist, also accounts, vouchers and books belonging to the Accounts Branch going back to 1874.

Tuesday, 26th October, 1897.

The Commissioners, in company with the Minister and Deputy Minister of Agriculture to-day completed their inspection of the Department of Agriculture by visiting the Archives Branch. This branch of the department at the time of the fire in the West Block, occupied the basement rooms immediately underneath the Customs Department. A short time ago these archives were transferred to the basement of the Langevin Block pending the preparation of a room to receive them. This room, which is immediately opposite the office of the Minister of Agriculture, is now being fitted up with iron frames and wooden shelving ; a wooden partition runs across the room separating it from the office occupied by the Honourable Mr. Dobell. It was the original intention to store these archives against this wooden partition, but the Minister of Agriculture has since directed that this wooden wall be covered with asbestic in order to lessen the risk from fire which, nevertheless, the Commissioners think considerable. This room has one large window which overlooks two saloons and the rear of shops on Sparks Street ; should fire at any time break out in these wooden buildings, there seems reason to apprehend that the flames would invade the archives room by way of the window.

The Commissioners then visited the archives themselves, which are temporarily lodged in the basement. They occupy two rooms, one being mainly devoted to bound newspaper files and the other to the archives proper. These volumes while neatly piled on the floor, are temporarily inaccessible. From Doctor Brymner's report, however, it is obvious that many of them are of similar character to those in the Department of the Secretary of State, Privy Council Office, Militia Department and elsewhere.

## DEPARTMENT OF TRADE AND COMMERCE.

Friday, 8th October, 1897.

Messrs. Courtney and Pope visited the Department of Trade and Commerce this afternoon. This department was constituted only five years ago, and the volume of its papers is relatively small. The correspondence is divided into two classes (1) That bearing on the general business of the department, and (2) That relating to Chinese immigration of which the deputy-head is the chief comptroller. The Chinese correspondence is kept in a separate register. Mr. Parmelee has no papers in his charge which he thinks could be advantageously destroyed, nor is he prepared to name any date when any part of them could be deemed useless. This department is absolutely without protection of any kind against fire. This is to be regretted, for with the growth and development of the country's commerce, it will naturally come to possess a varied and interesting correspondence with all parts of the Empire, on subjects of imperial interest, such, for example, as the East Atlantic Service and the Pacific Cable. Before that time arrives it is to be hoped that the accommodation of the department will be enlarged. At present it consists of five rooms, of which the Minister has one, the Deputy another, the Private Secretary the third and the messengers a fourth. In the fifth are huddled eight persons, the whole staff of the department. In this crowded room are kept the records of the department in wooden cabinets.

## THE OFFICE OF THE COMPTROLLER OF THE NORTH-WEST MOUNTED POLICE.

Friday, 8th October, 1897.

Messrs. Courtney and Pope also inspected this afternoon the Office of the Comptroller of the North-west Mounted Police. This office was one of the chief sufferers by the fire last winter and is now occupying temporary quarters in the third story of the Langevin Block. The Comptroller informed the Commissioners that the following books and papers had been destroyed by the fire:—

- (1) All correspondence from 1877 to 1887 and some of 1891.
- (2) All registers from 1892 to 1895, also one register of 1881.
- (3) Letter-books from 1873 to 1883, also letter-books covering broken periods between 1887 and 1892.
- (4) All vouchers and financial statements between 1879 and 1893.
- (5) Quarter-masters' returns prior to 1893-94.

Mr. White stated that they had been fortunate enough to save what was of most value, and that much of what was destroyed was really of little use.

The Comptroller is of opinion that quarter-masters' returns (which form the bulk of his papers), clothing requisitions, &c., muster-rolls, compensation for kits, and matters of routine, might be destroyed after five years.

The Comptroller is at present occupying a portion of the old model room in the third flat of the Langevin Block temporarily partitioned off for him. His staff is stationed in the library of the Patent Branch of the Department of Agriculture in the same flat. This arrangement is inconvenient in the highest degree, as the clerks are without any facilities for the performance of their duties. For example, much of their work calls for the handling of large registers and other books, several of which require to be open at the same time. This the small temporary shelving (it cannot be called desk room) of the Patent Library will not allow, and much inconvenience arises thereby. Then there is no gas or other artificial means of lighting the room. The Commissioners are of opinion that here as elsewhere in the Langevin Block, much valuable space is wasted, and that by carrying up the shelving and other receptacles for books and papers, and running galleries round the walls not a little ground room might be gained. They also observed that a very large number of books in the patent room referred to, bore the stamp of the Library of Parliament, and are of opinion, with a view to their present insecurity, that these books had better be returned whence they came.

The Mounted Police papers which escaped the fire are in wooden cabinets in the corridor of the third flat.

That part of the model room not occupied by Mr. White is filled with old models, of various kinds, and wooden cabinets containing caveats. Above this room in the attic are more models, in fact the space under the eaves is filled with them. The light character of these models, their arrangement and the dry and tinder-like material of which they are composed constitute in the opinion of the Commissioners an ever-present source of danger from fire. These models would burn fiercely and the heat engendered thereby would speedily twist and render useless the iron girders among which they are piled. Nothing throughout this inquiry has struck the Commissioners as being more unsecure than the condition of the attic of the Langevin Block. These models thrown where they lie in dust, apparently have outlived their usefulness, but in any case the Commissioners recommend that they be removed from the attic without delay.

## DEPARTMENT OF MILITIA AND DEFENCE.

Thursday, 14th October, 1897.

Messrs. Courtney and Pope to-day inspected this department, which has two main divisions, civil and military, the Stores Branch forming part of the civil division. The register room of the civil branch was first visited, in which is kept the general correspondence going back to 1867, filed in steel cabinets, the only ones the Commissioners have met with in the service. These metal receptacles give much satisfaction and amply fulfil the expectations formed of them.

The Commissioners then visited the basement and inspected a number of bright rooms which are occupied by clerks of the Accounts Branch. On the other side of the basement are rooms containing a large quantity of different vouchers



of payments made for drill and other military expenditures going back many years ; these rooms are damp and many of the books and papers show evidence of decay.

In a room up-stairs the Commissioners inspected a number of documents relating to the War of 1812, many of them being of historic interest ; these are being stored and arranged, the work being nearly completed.

The Stores Branch was then visited. In a wooden cupboard in a room of this branch are filed requisitions for original issues of 1860, which should be preserved as the foundation of the militia system. In an adjoining room are kept ordinary requisitions going back a number of years ; the bulk of these, Colonel Macdonald thinks, might be destroyed after seven years ; the requisitions relating to clothing, &c., might be destroyed when the articles asked for by them have been worn out ; the storekeeper's returns need not be kept more than two years.

In the Engineer's Branch are stored in wooden drawers, plans of the various militia buildings, &c., going back about fifteen years ; previous to that date they are to be found in the Department of Public Works. A number of militia plans are also to be found in the Adjutant General's Branch under Colonel Lake. The Commissioners think that these departmental plans should be brought together and deposited in one place.

The Accountant's Branch was then visited. The vouchers of this branch exist for at least twenty-five years. The accountant is of opinion that none of the pay-sheets, accounts, cheques, &c., need be kept longer than ten years.

The Adjutant General's Branch was then visited ; this is further subdivided into,

1. The Adjutant General's Office ;
2. Quartermaster General's Office ;
3. Office of the Assistant Adjutant General for Artillery.
4. Office of the Deputy Assistant Adjutant General. The correspondence goes back only to the year 1882, all dockets previous to the first of July of that year having been destroyed by order of General Herbert. This correspondence relates principally to questions of discipline, training of the militia, &c., appointments and promotions. The Adjutant General thinks that all papers of historic interest ought to be transferred to a central bureau after six years. He is of opinion that much of the general correspondence of his branch might be destroyed after ten years.

In this department the correspondence is much divided. In the first place there is a register for the Secretary's Branch, that is, what may be termed the department proper. There is a separate register for the Military Branch ; that may be convenient, and even necessary, but the Commissioners do not see any good reason why the Stores Branch should have a register distinct from both, and the Engineer's Branch also a register of its own ; they think it would tend to the better administration of the department if all the letters coming into the civil division of the department were entered in one register and under one series of numbers.

## DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR.

Monday, 18th October, 1897.

Messrs. Courtney and Pope visited the Department of the Interior this afternoon, and in company with the Deputy Minister inspected the various offices. This department has recently removed from the East Block to the fourth and fifth flats of the Langevin Block. As regards correspondence it may be regarded as divided into four sections (1) The Secretary's Branch, including the papers of the Surveyor General's Office, (2) the Immigration Branch, (3) Timber and Mines Branch, and (4) the Ordnance Branch. In addition to these there is the office of the Commissioner of Dominion Lands recently transferred from Winnipeg, the files of which number about 90,000.

The correspondence of the department proper goes back to 1871, and numbers nearly half a million files. These are stored in pine cabinets about 7 feet high, arranged in rows and taking up a considerable portion of the fifth flat, which is not divided off into rooms. Further along what has the appearance of a large corridor are the survey records of the North-west. These, which comprise the original field notes and plans of the surveyors who laid out the country, are among the most valuable of the Government Archives, representing as they do five or six millions of dollars. Their destruction would involve in many cases re-surveys; yet these precious documents are lying on the floor exposed to all accidents from fire and water. The chief clerk reports that he has frequently applied for some proper receptacle for these papers, but without success. The Commissioners are of opinion that no time should be lost in placing them in a fire-proof vault. The Commissioners are further of opinion that it would be advisable, as lessening the risk from fire, to divide off by fire-proof walls and iron doors the space in the top flat now occupied by the Correspondence Branch, the Surveys Branch and the Immigration Branch. Such divisions would confine any fire which might arise to one room, and would lessen the ever-present danger to which these valuable records are exposed; besides doing away with the noise and draughts which annoy the clerks.

The Surveyor General's Office, which is over the Bank of Ottawa, also contains some three or four thousand valuable maps, which are equally exposed to destruction. In the Immigration Branch is a large collection of literature, including as many as sixty varieties of pamphlets, stored in a cupboard 35 feet long. The clerks think that the bulk of this literature would be better in the basement.

The Land Patent Room, on the same flat, was then visited. Here are kept in wooden cabinets (1) Township plans, (2) Recommendations for patents, (3) Applications for homestead entries, (4) Township and Homestead Registers and (5) Returns from agents. This room is situated in the west end of the Langevin Block. The attention of the Commissioners was called to the advisability of providing the inmates of this room with means of escape in case of fire. There are two passenger elevators in this block, one at the east and one at the west end. The east end one runs to the top, but the west end one runs to the fourth flat. The clerks of the Patent Branch have no means of escape at hand, for they would

have to go a considerable distance to gain the nearest stairway, or traverse the whole length, of the flat to reach the elevator.

In the Ordnance Branch is a large collection of documents relating to the acquisition of the Rideau Canal, the Seignior of Sorel, and other historic subjects. Here also are to be found many original Crown lands papers, correspondence with the Imperial Government, as well as many title deeds of different old Crown properties throughout the country. These papers, many of which must be of historical interest, ought to be safeguarded with care. At present they are in wooden cupboards in the East Block, not having been brought over at the time of the removal of the department because there was no provision for their reception in the Langevin Block.

In the Accountant's Branch is to be found the usual accumulation of vouchers, accounts, cheques, &c. The accountant is of opinion that, with the exception of surveyors' accounts, all these vouchers might be destroyed at the end of five years. As regards the time limit for the keeping of documents, with the exception of the accountant the officials of this department seem averse to the idea of destruction of any of their papers.

The Commissioners are of the opinion that the recommendation they have already made with reference to the utilization of space applies equally to the Department of the Interior as to the other departments in the Langevin Block, and they would advise that the low bulky wooden receptacles for papers, now in use, be replaced by metal cabinets extending to the ceiling of the rooms, and reached by iron galleries. That this would result in a very great saving of room the clerks feel assured. They are moreover of the opinion that many documents occupying space in front offices might be relegated to the dark basement rooms.

On the fifth flat the Commissioners observed a large number of bags—some 300 they were told—on the floor. On inquiry they were found to contain dead letters, and the Commissioners were informed that similar matter belonging to the Post Office Department is continually exposed in this manner throughout the building. The Commissioners in their report on the Post Office Department have already drawn attention to this very undesirable practice, and they recommend that it be discontinued.

## DEPARTMENT OF INDIAN AFFAIRS.

Friday, 22nd October, 1897.

Messrs. Courtney and Pope, in company with the Deputy Superintendent General, to-day visited this department, which is on the second and third floors of the Eastern Block, formerly occupied by the Department of the Interior.

The Department of Indian Affairs was originally under military control, being administered by the Commander of the Forces, the officers in command at various points acting as superintendents or agents. About the year 1844 it was placed



under the charge of the Governor General's Civil Secretary. In 1860 it passed under the Crown Lands Department. At Confederation it was attached to the Department of the Secretary of State. In 1873 it was placed under the Department of the Interior, and in 1880 it was constituted a separate department.

As is to be looked for, this department possesses a number of historic documents of rare interest. In one of the vaults the Commissioners were shown the original treaties with the various Indian tribes, dating from the year 1760. They also inspected a number of bound volumes of manuscript containing the reports of the Indian Commissioners at Albany, dating from 1722; Sir William Johnston's conferences with the Indians, and his correspondence with the Home Government, &c.; there are upwards of twelve of these books which contain in part the story of the Mohawk War, the conspiracy of Pontiac, the migration of the Six Nation Indians, and other matters of historic interest. These books are on the third flat with no protection whatever against fire. Their loss would be irreparable and the Commissioners recommend that they be transferred without delay to a place of safety.

The correspondence of this department is divided into two general divisions; letters relating to the Indians of Ontario and Quebec form one division, and letters relating to the Indians of the other provinces of Canada and the North-west Territories the other, each division having a register-book of its own.

The records of the department go back to the year 1722 with a few gaps. In the main record room is the correspondence from the year 1890, and in another corridor is another room where are kept the files from 1882 to 1892 of the North-west Territories and British Columbia, and in a third room files from 1888 to 1890 of Ontario and Quebec. The older files, together with the letter-books, which go back to the year 1820 (the latter being very nearly complete) are kept up stairs. Nothing appears to have been destroyed in this department. The officials, however, are of opinion that the annual reports of agents, which are of large bulk, might be destroyed after one year.

There does not seem to be any large supply of stationery kept in this department, the stock being confined largely to printed forms; the stationery being ordered from the Queen's Printer as wanted for the agencies.

In the Lands and Timber Branch on the third flat, the Commissioners were shown a large number of maps of reserves, surrendered lands, &c.; most of the maps are original and are kept with the same insecurity as in other departments. On the same flat are kept the assignments of lands sold by the department, also the sales-books of Indian lands, and also the Agents' returns; also books of reference.

In the Accounts Branch are the ledgers, journals and books of account in connection with the Indian Trust Funds and the Consolidated Fund Accounts; these old books go back to the year 1858 and are highly valuable. All the vouchers of accounts, after being returned from the Auditor-General, are stored in boxes. The accountant is of opinion that these vouchers might be destroyed after ten years—at present nothing is destroyed. This branch is in great need of a safe in which to keep signed cheques and other valuables; at present they are provided with nothing of the kind.

## PRIVY COUNCIL OFFICE.

Monday, 25th October, 1897.

The Commissioners, Messrs. Courtney, McDougall, and Pope to-day visited the Privy Council Office, and in company with the Clerk of the Privy Council made the usual inspection. In the Tower Room, which is divided into two divisions (the higher one being reached from the lower by an iron spiral stair case), seemingly protected against fire, are the Minutes of Council from 1841 ; these are fairly complete and are neatly arranged in portfolios along wooden shelves. In the attic room are filed the recommendations of the various Ministers upon which minutes of Council are founded. These recommendations date back from 1867 and are arranged on the same system as the minutes in the Tower Room ; all these papers appear to be in good order and readily accessible. In addition to these there is upstairs a large mass of state papers belonging to the old Executive Council of Canada. These are being collated and arranged. The Commissioners had not an opportunity of examining them in any detail, but they are evidently similar in nature to those in the Secretary of State's Department, Agriculture Department and others, all of which collections, in the opinion of the Commissioners, should be brought together. The Clerk of the Privy Council does not favour the idea of a central bureau for the records of the Government, at least in so far as the Privy Council Office is concerned, the reason being that, in his opinion, it is necessary to the convenience of the Ministers that the records of Council should be available at a moment's notice. The Commissioners, however, understood this opinion to relate only to papers dating from the year 1841, and not to apply to the older documents to which reference has just been had.

The Commissioners observed no indiscriminate collection of blue-books or odds and ends, in this office, beyond a few files of old newspapers, and were informed that none existed.

## APPENDIX C.

## CIRCULAR ADDRESSED TO THE SEVERAL DEPARTMENTS RESPECTING THE EXAMINATION OF THEIR RECORDS TOGETHER WITH REPLIES RECEIVED.

Ottawa, 17th March, 1897.

Sir,—I have the honour to transmit, herewith, copy of a Treasury Board Minute of the 19th February, 1897, approved by His Excellency the Governor General in Council on the 4th instant, appointing the Deputy Minister of Finance, the Auditor-General and the Under-Secretary of State a Departmental Commission to examine into and report upon the state of the records in the several departments, and to ask you when it would be convenient for you to receive a visit from the Commissioners in pursuance of this inquiry in so far as relates to your department.

I have the honour to be, Sir,

Your obedient servant,

JOSEPH POPE,

Secretary.

Note—This circular was sent to all the Deputy Heads of departments and to the Clerk of the Privy Council.

## DEPARTMENT OF INLAND REVENUE.

Ottawa, 18th March, 1897.

Sir,— I have the honour to acknowledge receipt of your letter of yesterday's date inclosing copy of Treasury Board Minute, approved by His Excellency on the 4th instant, appointing a Departmental Commission to examine into and report upon the state of the records in the several departments.

In reply to your inquiry as to when it would be most convenient for the Commission to visit this department, I beg to inform you that this afternoon between the hours of 2.30 and 4 p.m. would be suitable, or such other time thereafter as would be most convenient to the members of the Commission themselves.

I have the honour to be, Sir,

Your obedient servant,

E. MIALL,

Commissioner.

Joseph Pope, Esq.,

Under-Secretary of State,

Secretary Departmental Commission re Records, Ottawa.



## PRIVY COUNCIL, CANADA.

Ottawa, March 18th, 1897.

Sir,—In acknowledging the receipt of your communication of the 17th inst-  
ant, asking when it would be convenient to receive the Departmental Commis-  
sion appointed to report upon the periodical destruction of such papers as may  
be deemed useless, I might suggest that, as Council meets nearly every day at  
uncertain calls of the President and as all parties are in this block, an hour's notice  
might be sufficient to ensure the visit mentioned.

I have the honour to be, Sir,

Your obedient servant,

JOHN J. MCGEE,

Clerk of the Privy Council.

Joseph Pope, Esq.,

Under-Secretary of State.

## DEPARTMENT OF TRADE AND COMMERCE.

Ottawa, March 18th, 1897.

Sir,—I am in receipt of yours of yesterday's date covering a copy of a  
Treasury Board Minute having reference to an examination into and a report  
upon the state of the records in the several departments, and asking when it will  
be convenient to receive a visit from the Commission appointed for that purpose  
in pursuance of that inquiry. In answer I beg to state that any time that it is  
convenient for the Commissioners to look into the matter, I shall be pleased to  
give them such information as is possible with reference to the records of this  
department.

I have the honour to be, Sir,

Your obedient servant,

W. G. PARMELEE,

Deputy Minister.

Joseph Pope, Esq.,

Under-Secretary of State,

Ottawa.

## DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC PRINTING AND STATIONERY.

Ottawa, 18th March, 1897.

Sir,—I am in receipt of your letter of the 17th in relation to a commission  
upon the Departmental Records, and beg to say in reply that any time which will  
suit the Commission to examine into the records of this department will suit me.  
All I shall require is a simple notice of the day you are coming down so that I may  
be in the office myself to afford any assistance which may be requisite.

I have the honour to be, Sir,

Your obedient servant,

S. E. DAWSON,

Queen's Printer and Controller of Stationery.

Joseph Pope, Esq.,

Under-Secretary of State.

## CUSTOMS DEPARTMENT, OTTAWA.

Ottawa, 18th March, 1897.

Sir,—I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 17th instant, inclosing copy of a Treasury Board Minute, approved by the Governor General in Council, appointing a Departmental Commission to examine and report upon the state of the records in the departments ; and asking when it would be convenient for me to receive a visit from the Commissioners in connection with such inquiry, in so far as relates to the Department of Customs.

In reply, I beg to state that any day, after 4 p.m., will be convenient to me, but I should be glad to be advised, by telephone, in the forenoon of the day which the Commissioners may select.

I have the honour to be, Sir,

Your obedient servant,

JOHN McDUGALD,

Commissioner.

Joseph Pope, Esq.,

Secretary, Departmental Commission,  
Ottawa.

## DEPARTMENT OF INDIAN AFFAIRS.

Ottawa, 18th March, 1897.

Sir,—I have the honour to acknowledge receipt of your letter of yesterday's date, inclosing copy of an approved Minute of the Treasury Board, dated the 19th ultimo, with reference to the destruction of useless records in the various departments.

In reply to your inquiry I beg to say that examination of records in this department may be made at any time suitable to the convenience of the Commissioners.

Your obedient servant,

HAYTER REED,

Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs.

The Under-Secretary of State,

Ottawa.

## POST OFFICE DEPARTMENT.

Ottawa, 18th March, 1897.

Sir,—I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 17th instant, inclosing a copy of a Minute of the Treasury Board, bearing date 19th of February, 1897, approved by His Excellency the Governor General in Council on the 4th instant appointing the Deputy Minister of Finance, the Auditor-General and the Under Secretary of State, a Departmental Commission to examine into and report upon the state of the records of the several departments, and asking when it would be convenient for the Commissioners to visit this department ;

and, in reply, I beg to say that I shall be happy to receive the Commissioners at any time which they may find convenient, but should be glad, if possible, to have notice of their intended visit.

I have the honour to be, Sir,

Your obedient servant,

WM. WHITE,

Deputy Postmaster General.

Joseph Pope, Esq.,

Under-Secretary of State, Ottawa.

## DEPARTMENT OF RAILWAYS AND CANALS.

Ottawa, March 20th, 1897.

Sir,—In reply to your letter of the 17th instant, inclosing copy of a Treasury Board Minute of the 19th ultimo, appointing a Commission to examine into and report upon the state of the records of the several departments, I have the honour, by direction, to state that 10.30 on Monday morning, the 22nd instant, would be a convenient hour for the Deputy Minister of this department to receive the Commissioners.

I have the honour to be, Sir,

Your obedient servant,

JNO. H. BALDERSON,

Secretary.

Joseph Pope, Esq.,

Under-Secretary of State, Ottawa.

## MARINE AND FISHERIES.

Ottawa, 20th March, 1897.

Sir,—I have the honour to acknowledge receipt of your letter of the 17th instant inquiring when it would be convenient to receive a visit from the Commissioners appointed to examine into and report upon the state of the records of the several departments, and in reply, I am to inform you that any time, which is convenient to the Commissioners, will be agreeable to me.

I have the honour to be, Sir,

Your obedient servant,

F. GOURDEAU,

Deputy Minister of Marine and Fisheries.

Joseph Pope, Esq.,

Under-Secretary of State.

## GEOLOGICAL SURVEY DEPARTMENT.

Ottawa, 22nd March, 1897.

Sir,—I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of March 17th, inclosing copy of a Treasury Board Minute of the 19th February, 1897, re-



ferring to an examination of the state of the records in the several departments, and asking on what day it would be convenient for the Departmental Commission to visit this department.

I have the honour to state that any date the Commission may like to fix upon will be equally convenient, but that I should like to be notified a day or so in advance, in order that matters may be so arranged as to facilitate the inspection to be made.

I have the honour to be, Sir,  
Your obedient servant,  
GEORGE M. DAWSON.

Joseph Pope, Esq.

#### DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE.

Ottawa, 23rd March, 1897.

Sir,—In reply to your letter of the 17th instant, I have the honour to inform you that I should be pleased to receive a visit from the Commissioners and afford them all information in my power as to the records of this department, whenever they find it convenient to call upon me.

I am, Sir,  
Your obedient servant,  
E. L. NEWCOMBE,  
Deputy Minister of Justice.

Joseph Pope, Esq.,  
Under-Secretary of State, Ottawa.

#### DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE.

Ottawa, 24th March, 1897.

Sir,—I have the honour to acknowledge your letter of the 17th instant, and in reply beg to inform you that it will be convenient to me to receive a visit from the Departmental Commission, referred to therein, at any time it is convenient for them to visit me.

I have the honour to be, Sir,  
Your obedient servant,  
W. B. SCARTH,  
Deputy Minister of Agriculture.

Joseph Pope, Esq.,  
Secretary of the Departmental Commission,  
Department of the Secretary of State, Ottawa.

#### DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS.

Ottawa, March 24th, 1897.

Dear Mr. Pope,—It is pretty hard for me to say what day would be most convenient for your Commission to visit this department in connection with our

records, but I should think that Saturday afternoon, at an hour which you might name, would be suitable.

I need not recall to your attention that the fire which has occurred in the Western Block deprived us of a large portion of our documents, and we have had barely time, since we have moved into our temporary quarters, to restore anything like order in those we have been able to save from destruction.

Yours very truly,

A. GOBEIL,

Deputy Minister.

#### DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR.

Ottawa, 24th March, 1897.

Sir,—I beg to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 17th instant, and to say that I shall be glad to meet the Commissioners at any time it may suit their convenience to visit the department.

I have the honour to be, Sir,

Your obedient servant,

A. M. BURGESS,

Deputy of the Minister of the Interior.

Joseph Pope, Esq.,

Under-Secretary of State, Ottawa.

Ottawa, 17th May, 1897.

Sir,—On the 4th March, 1897, His Excellency the Governor General was pleased to sanction a Minute of the Privy Council recommending the appointment of the Deputy of the Minister of Finance, the Auditor-General and the Under-Secretary of State, as a Departmental Commission to examine into and report upon the state of the records in the several departments; how and where they are kept and their safety in case of fire; what papers or records might be destroyed and after what interval of time; and generally to report fully on these subjects with a view to the adoption of a system for the safe-keeping of the public records which are required to be preserved, and the periodical destruction of such papers and vouchers as may be deemed to be useless.

This inquiry is now being pursued, and with special reference to that branch of it which relates to the safety of the public records and the periodical destruction of such papers as serve merely to cumber the attics and basements of the public buildings, I am to ask whether you desire that the Commission should include in the scope of its inquiry the offices of the Governor General's Secretary.

I have the honour to be, Sir,

Your obedient servant,

JOSEPH POPE,

Under-Secretary of State.

The Governor General's Secretary,  
Ottawa.

## OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR GENERAL'S SECRETARY, CANADA.

Ottawa, 21st May, 1897.

Sir,—In reply to the inquiry contained in your letter of the 17th inst., whether it was desired that the offices of the Governor General's Secretary should be included in the scope of the inquiry to be conducted by the Departmental Commission appointed to examine into and report upon the state of the records in the several departments, I have the honour to inform you that it will not be necessary to include my offices in this inquiry.

I have the honour to be, Sir,  
Your obedient servant,

DAVID ERSKINE,  
Governor General's Secretary.

Joseph Pope, Esq.,  
Under-Secretary of State.

Ottawa, 17th September, 1897.

Sir,—On the 4th of March last a Minute of Council was passed appointing the Deputy of the Minister of Finance, the Auditor-General and the Under-Secretary of State to be a Departmental Commission to inquire into and report to the Treasury Board on the state of the public records in the various departments; how and where they are kept, and their safety in case of fire; what papers and records may be destroyed and after what interval of time, the whole with a view to the establishment of a system having for its object the safe-keeping of the public records which required to be preserved and the periodical destruction of such papers as might be deemed to be useless.

The Commission visited a number of the departments, but in consequence of the session of Parliament it was not found possible to complete the round before the holiday season. Some departments have yet to be visited, among them yours. I am requested by my brother Commissioners to inquire when it would suit your convenience that we should visit the Post Office Department for the purposes I have indicated.

I have the honour to be, Sir,  
Your obedient servant,

JOSEPH POPE,  
Secretary.

R. M. Coulter, Esq.,  
Deputy Postmaster General, Ottawa.

Note.—A similar letter was addressed on the same day to James A. Smart, Esq., Deputy of the Minister of the Interior.

Ottawa, 20th September, 1897.

Dear Colonel Panet,—You may, perhaps, remember that there was a commission appointed last spring, consisting of the Deputy of the Minister of Finance, the Auditor-General and myself, to visit the various departments with the object



of ascertaining the disposal of the records ; how and where they are kept, their safety in case of fire, &c. The heavy work of the session made it impossible for us to visit all the departments before the holiday season. Now, however, that is over, we feel that we should finish the few departments yet remaining to be visited as soon as possible ; yours is among the number, and my brother Commissioners would be glad to know when it would be convenient for you that we should visit your department. We should like to go this afternoon if that would suit—perhaps you would kindly let me know this by bearer.

Yours very truly,

JOSEPH POPE,

Colonel C. Eugene Panet,

Deputy of the Minister of Militia and Defence, Ottawa

POSTMASTER GENERAL, CANADA.

Ottawa, 20th September, 1897.

Sir,—In reply to your letter of September 17th asking when it would be convenient for the Commission appointed to inquire into the state of the public records and their safety in case of accident, I may state that any day now suited to the convenience of the Commission will be satisfactory to this department.

I have the honour to be, Sir,

Your obedient servant,

R. M. COULTER,

Deputy Postmaster General.

Joseph Pope, Esq.,

Under-Secretary of State, Ottawa.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR.

Ottawa, 20th September, 1897.

Dear Sir,—I am in receipt of your letter of the 17th instant, referring to the Minute of Council passed on the 4th March last appointing the Deputy Minister of Finance, the Auditor-General and yourself, a commission to inquire into and report to the Treasury Board on the state of the public records in the various departments. I beg to say in reply that so far as this department is concerned I will be very pleased to arrange to have you visit the various offices at any time it may be convenient for you to do so within the next ten days, or later on if it suits you better.

Yours very truly,

JAS. A. SMART,

Deputy Minister.

Joseph Pope, Esq.,

Under-Secretary of State,  
Ottawa.

## DEPARTMENT OF MILITIA AND DEFENCE.

Ottawa, 23rd September, 1897.

Sir,—In reply to your communication of the 20th instant, relative to the visit to the archives and records of this department by the Commission appointed last spring, I have the honour to state that this department is not yet settled in its new quarters, and none of the papers will be placed in their proper places for some time. A visit under these circumstances would be entirely useless, and I would advise you to postpone it for a few weeks.

I have the honour to be, Sir,

Your obedient servant,

C. EUG. PANET, Colonel,

Deputy Minister of Militia and Defence.

Joseph Pope, Esq.,

Under-Secretary of State, Ottawa.

## APPENDIX D.

## MISCELLANEOUS MEMORANDA AND CORRESPONDENCE ADDRESSED TO THE COMMISSIONERS.

## GEOLOGICAL SURVEY DEPARTMENT.

Ottawa, 14th May, 1897.

Sir,—Availing myself of the invitation of the Commission on Records briefly to explain the actual position of the Geological Survey Department in regard to the safeguarding of its records against the danger of fire, &c., I have the honour to submit the following statement :—

The collections, maps, documents, field-notes, library, &c., now contained in the old building on Sussex Street, comprise in concrete form the results of a scientific survey and examination of Canada which has been continuously and uninterruptedly maintained by the Canadian Government since 1843, or for more than fifty years. The building in which these really national records are still housed, is not only cramped, structurally unsafe, and wholly unsuited in plan for the purpose, but is exposed to the hourly danger of destruction by fire, both because of its character and surroundings. There is still no water supply in the entire building which would be of the slightest use in case of emergency, and not even a safe in which to keep the departmental account books.

Frequent occasions have been taken to represent the great risk which is thus being run, in the annual official reports presented to Parliament, and various public and representative bodies, such as the City Council and the Board of Trade of Ottawa, the Royal Society of Canada, Mining Associations, &c., have memorialized the Government from time to time on the same subject. The press, of various parts of the country, has adverted to the apparent neglect of the collections and records, and a number of distinguished visitors interested in scientific and technical pursuits have from time to time expressed their opinions to the same effect.

It is scarcely necessary, however, to quote at length such representations and expressions. A mere statement of the facts in the shortest possible form is sufficient to show the urgent necessity of some immediate steps being taken towards the erection of a suitable fire-proof building for the Museum and offices of the Geological Survey.

The collections now comprise, under various classes, more than 120,000 specimens either on exhibition or classified and readily accessible, besides much material, representing special districts or classes of objects, which has not yet been worked up, as it remains packed in boxes for want of space. These collec-



tions must be considered as being of the nature of records, comprising as they do the actual specimens upon which published descriptions and studies have been based. There are more than 2,000 type specimens, which if lost can never be replaced, and access to which for purposes of study is frequently requested by specialists from different parts of the world.

An approximate estimate of the maps and plans places the number at about 13,000 of which a considerable proportion could not be replaced if lost, while very many more could be duplicated only at much cost and trouble.

The reference library includes over 10,000 volumes and a large number of pamphlets chiefly of a technical character, and in many cases costly and rare, as well as a large series of scientific journals which could be replaced, if at all, only with great difficulty.

A further and most important consideration is that the building contains the entire reserve stock of publications of the Survey itself, both reports and maps since its commencement. These deal with geology, mineralogy, mines, &c., of the different parts of Canada, and relating as they do to the work done in particular districts and on special subjects, very few of them can be considered as obsolete. In proof of this, it is only necessary to state that requests are frequently received for special reports or maps of even the earliest dates. The printed list of publications enumerates more than 500 such publications, and although some of them are now out of print, the majority may still be obtained by the public when required. Should this stock of the published results of the Survey disappear, the practical utility of the whole of the work accomplished would, in a great measure, be lost.

The following paragraph referring to the general subject, may be quoted from the last official report made to the Honourable the Minister of the Interior :—

“The number of visitors to the museum again shows a notable increase, having risen to 31,595 in 1896, and every year the necessity for a modern and safer building of greater size, becomes more urgent. A computation shows that, for the museum, such a building should have about double the floor-space of the present one, with provision in the plan for further enlargement in future years. Considerable additions to the space now employed for offices, library and for purposes of storage, &c., are also required. The situation and construction of the present building render the danger from fire excessive, a fact particularly evidenced during the past summer by the occurrence of a conflagration in lots adjacent to the rear, which under slightly different conditions might easily have involved this building. The collections, embracing as they do more than 2,000 unique ‘type’ specimens, with the entire supply of reports and maps, and the manuscripts and notes representing over fifty years of work, would constitute an irremedial loss to the country if destroyed.”

The site occupied by the present building is unsuitable, both because of the surrounding buildings of an inflammable character, and because the present building faces, on two sides, on streets from which dust enters in large quantities, and with very detrimental effect to some classes of specimens.

The constitution of the Survey and the character of its work, render it essential that a new building should be made to include both museum and offices. The building should be at least fire-proof and strong. The cost of such a building for present purposes need not, it is believed, exceed \$200,000 or \$300,000 in all, exclusive of the cost of the site if it should be found necessary to purchase one.

A rough sketch of plan, with estimates of space required, &c., was, however, placed in the hands of the chief architect, some time ago, upon which it would not be difficult for any competent architect to base a somewhat more detailed and accurate estimate than it is now possible to make. In the meantime, a suitable site might be selected, after which detailed plans and estimates might be drawn up, and if a comparatively small sum could be granted for the purpose during the present session, the foundations, at least, of an appropriate building might be laid before next winter.

I have the honour to be, Sir,

Your obedient servant,

GEORGE M. DAWSON,

Director, Geological Survey.

Joseph Pope, Esq.,

Secretary, Departmental Commission on Records.

#### DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE.

Ottawa, 12th October, 1897.

Dear Mr. Pope,—We have received to-day in the Copyright Branch a letter of which the following is a copy :—

“Montreal, October 11, 1897.

“The Minister of Agriculture, Ottawa, Ont.

“Honourable Sir,—We wish to have copies of all trade-marks and assignments registered by ——— since 1870 to date.

“If you will please tell us the cost we will mail you a money order to cover the expenses.

“Yours very respectfully,

\* \* \* \*

I send you this merely for your information. You will see from it that the same course could not be adopted in the destruction of copyright records as can be with general correspondence and accounts, and I may say that the Patent Branch, as to documents, is in exactly the same position as the copyright.

Such letters as the above, both branches are continually receiving.

Yours very truly,

W. B. SCARTH, D.M.A.

Joseph Pope, Esq.,

Under-Secretary of State, Ottawa.

Ottawa, 3rd November, 1897.

J. M. Courtney, Esq.,

Deputy Minister of Finance, Ottawa.

Sir,—With reference to the visit of yourself and Mr. Pope, Under-Secretary of State, to this office in connection with the filing of the documents of this

branch of the department, I have the honour to state that, after a consideration of the subject by the Adjutant General and myself, I am of opinion that papers for about four years back, aggregating about 25,000 cases, should be retained here so as to be readily accessible. They should then be overhauled, when, perhaps, 50 per cent could be destroyed. The balance should be deposited in some place where access could be had to them, or from where they could be obtained on requisition. After a further period of, say six years, these papers should be again overhauled and only such as are worth preserving indefinitely, probably not 5 per cent of the original number, would require to be longer preserved.

I have the honour to be, Sir

Your obedient servant,

W. J. GASCOIGNE, Major-Gen.,  
Commanding Canadian Militia.

## DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR.

Ottawa, 6th November, 1897.

Sir,—I have the honour, at the request and with the concurrence of the Deputy Minister, to offer the following expression of my views on the question of the storage of the large and rapidly accumulating records of this department.

These papers could be divided into three classes :

1st, those which form the basis of, or relate to land titles, which should not only be preserved, but also kept in a fire-proof place ;

2nd, those which might be destroyed at intervals of eight or ten years, such as the duplicates of pay-lists and other papers kept in the Accounts Branch, the originals of which are of record elsewhere ; and

3rd, correspondence of an evanescent nature, such as applications for maps, reports, or information which, when given, the letter is seldom referred to again. Most of the letters recorded in the Immigration Branch, and many of those kept in the Timber and Mines Branch, are of this latter kind, and might be stored away in boxes every three or four years till finally destroyed. It would not be necessary to provide fire-proof storage for such papers.

It will be a comparatively easy matter to arrange for the filing of our papers after a given date, say 1st January next, in such a manner as to make it possible to sort them into the three classes I suggest ; but as to the existing mass of over 447,000 letters in the general registration office alone, we are met with the difficulty that much of this correspondence is of a kind that should not be destroyed, and to sift out the chaff from the wheat would involve more clerical labour than we can spare. The late Mr. White, when Minister of the Interior, thought that many of our papers might safely be destroyed, and to satisfy himself on this point he examined several hundred files, with the result that he found such a large proportion related to land titles that he concluded it would not be either safe or worth while to attempt to pick out the useless papers.

Assuming, therefore, that it is unadvisable either to destroy or to attempt to classify these papers, I think that the best thing to do with them is to put all



those received previous to about 1890 in boxes carefully labelled and store the boxes in the basement of this building, or any other fire-proof place, where access could be had to them.

I have the honour to be, Sir,

Your obedient servant,

JOHN R. HALL,

Secretary.

J. M. Courtney, Esq.,

Deputy Minister of Finance, Ottawa.

### MEMORANDUM.

The following observations and suggestions are respectfully submitted with a view of securing better facilities for preserving Savings Bank documents and records and for their protection against possible loss by fire.

The Post Office Savings Bank occupies the three rooms on the ground floor at the east end of the building known as the Langevin Block. One of these rooms, a very small one, is used exclusively by the superintendent, and the other two—both large—are used by clerks and sorters jointly. These rooms not only furnish the desk-space required for the duties of a staff of forty officials, but they are at the same time forced, from the lack of available space elsewhere, to furnish storage accommodation for the larger mass of constantly accumulating documents which have to be preserved.

Although all records and documents connected with the business of the bank are of great importance, being evidence of cash transactions, yet those which require the most exceptional care and protection are the ledgers, of which there are at present 1,247. These ledgers contain 650,000 accounts, and they constitute the only authentic record of the various sums received from and repaid to depositors and of the balance—now \$33,100,000—due by the Government and to be claimed from it; depositors' accounts with the Post Office Savings Bank are all exclusively kept in the department at Ottawa, and these ledgers contain the particulars of each. Any loss or injury, therefore, to such records would be an irreparable calamity. What are the present dangers to which the bank ledgers are exposed? The greatest danger is from fire—fire either in the rooms themselves or fire in the building generally. The risk of fire in the individual rooms arises, partly, from their being over-crowded with "preserved" documents which should find a lodgment in separate quarters, and, partly, from the flimsy and unprotected method of supplying the gas-light. Many documents, from lack of sufficient shelving (long since applied for from the Public Works Department but not furnished) have had to be piled up in heaps on the floor, thus doubly increasing not only the risk from accidental fire but likewise injury or loss from misplacement. The mode of providing gas-light has always been a source of danger; it is supplied by means of a multitude of small half-inch pipes reaching directly down from the lofty ceilings to within a few inches of the desks. There have been times when from a defective pipe, or an imperfectly turned key, so much gas has escaped during the night that the clerks could not with safety resume their

duties on the following morning until the rooms had been purified. The remedy for this danger would seem to be, electric light instead of gas—a change that would be a great boon to the staff of the Savings Bank who have, during the very hot months of midsummer, to perform so much night-duty in these crowded rooms.

With regard to the danger from fire outside of the rooms, that raises the question as to whether the Langevin Block is a “fire-proof” building in the sense in which that term should be applied to a bank. Has the Government in its possession a formal opinion from any expert on this point? If not, it would seem desirable that some competent person—one not connected either directly or indirectly with its original construction—should be asked to pronounce upon the extent to which the building may be considered fire-proof. In any case, attention must be drawn to what appears to be the insufficient police protection afforded to the building. There are practically six flats to be guarded, and yet both during the day and during the night these are all entrusted to the care of but one man. The officer on duty is usually stationed on the ground floor opposite the front entrance on Wellington Street. How is it possible for him at all times to know from that point what is transpiring in the upper and distant flats or in the basements? Were a fire to occur at night—the most probable time—in one of the higher flats, it could only become known to the police after it had attained such headway as to force the smoke after it had completely filled the upper corridors, down to the ground flat. It can easily be perceived how inadequate one man would be to cope with such a state of things; he could not, except at the risk of his life, penetrate the smoke and reach the source of the fire; nor might the telephone, depending as it does upon the soundness of a single wire, be available, in such circumstances, to summon immediate help from the city fire brigade. It is to the strength and efficiency of the police in charge of the building that the bank has to look for its protection both against the risks of fire and the risks of unwarranted intrusion. For the purposes of protection the architectural arrangements are conspicuously weak; the basement windows have no protecting bars, nor are the ordinary fastenings either of a substantial character or self-adjusting. Entrance by evil-disposed persons could easily be had through these windows to the interior of the building at any time after the offices are closed without the knowledge of the policeman in charge.

There is a notable oversight in the method of supplying to the police in charge the keys for the various office doors. In the case of a fire after office hours, it is of the utmost importance that access be had “at once” to the room in which it is noticed, and, therefore, both the keys and the doors should be numbered, each bearing, in clear and easily-read figures, the same number, and the keys should always be at hand in duplicate (one set consecutively arranged on rings, and the other on a numbered key-board). As it is at present, much time is often consumed in finding the key adapted to a particular door, when entrance is needed after office hours for any special purpose.

Attention must be drawn to the present unavoidable, but dangerous, practice of using the corridors for storage space. The mass of documents, some loose, some in bags, some in boxes and wicker baskets—all very inflammable material—that now line the upper corridors, or crowded into the open

spaces in the basement, is a constant menace to the safety of the adjoining rooms. It is manifestly important, from the safety-point of view, that the corridors should at all times be kept absolutely "clean" and "clear," and the rule prohibiting smoking in any part of the building should be enforced by the police in charge.

If the Savings Bank must continue to occupy its present quarters, it ought to be provided with a larger fire-proof vault into which could be placed the annual summaries of depositors' accounts, the daily schedules of deposits and withdrawals for the current year and the unposted accounts, these being documents from which the balance due to each depositor could be established were the ledgers to be destroyed. There is unoccupied space in the lower basement along the whole corridor all inside of the building and between the basement wall and the wall of the corridor—a space (now filled with clay) sufficient to give the vaults a clear depth of 18 feet, on the side fronting on Wellington Street for a series of such vaults, and their construction would not injure the building in the least, but would be a great relief to all the departments needing them.

The following are the Savings Bank documents which must be retained, and experience shows that the respective periods fixed for their preservation by the Order in Council of the 5th July, 1890, cannot, with propriety, be reduced :

1. Ledgers containing depositors' accounts—preserved permanently.
2. Summaries of depositors' accounts—preserved for ten years.
3. Withdrawal applications—preserved for five years.
4. Receipts for repayments—preserved for fifteen years.
5. Closed and surrendered pass-books—preserved for three years.
6. Registers and proving schedules—preserved for three years.
7. Postmasters' accounts—preserved for three years.
8. Letter-books—preserved for five years.
9. Correspondence in "deceased" cases—preserved for five years.
10. Ordinary correspondence—preserved for two years.

D. MATHESON.

Post Office Savings Bank,  
October 16, 1897.

### MEMORANDUM ON PUBLIC RECORDS.

(ADDRESSED TO THE HON. SIR MACKENZIE BOWELL, K.C.M.G., ON THE 13TH DECEMBER, 1895.)

In accordance with instructions I have the honour to present the following report on the manner of keeping public records in various European countries with such suggestions as I have been desired to make for the consolidation of the public papers of Canada and such other papers as may be of sufficient service to Government to be acquired.

#### THE PUBLIC RECORDS OF THE UNITED KINGDOM.

The three Kingdoms of England, Scotland and Ireland have a general system of preserving their records, but as those of Scotland and Ireland relate chiefly



to the records of the courts of justice and documents of a similar kind, the system followed in England, which is more general in its nature, need only be reported on here.

The records of England were widely scattered and badly kept until a comparatively recent period. Commissions were appointed at various times to examine and report on their condition, but more attention appears to have been paid to the proposals for the publication of documents than to plans for their preservation and accessibility. The report for 1837, on which the present system is founded, shows the deplorable state of neglect into which the most valuable records had been allowed to fall. It is only necessary on this point to refer to some of the conclusions of the committee of 1837, which apply to all countries. The committee came to the conclusion that the state of affairs arose from buildings not erected for the purpose being used for the deposit of State papers, together with the practice of placing them in vaults and underground recesses.

The report says: "The introduction of a system of uniform management appears to us, we confess, hopeless in the present state of the records and offices." It was therefore recommended that a suitable building should be erected for a record office, but it was not until 1850, thirteen years after the report was made that the foundation of the Public Record Office was laid. Extensive as was the building, its capacity was soon overtaxed, a great part of this evil arising from the accumulation of masses of useless papers "of no possible interest to any one." A committee was appointed to deal with the subject and on its recommendation an act was passed in 1877, to provide for the destruction of useless papers, but with the most jealous precautions to prevent the slightest risk of improper influence being used to secure the destruction of a document which might be convenient to preserve.

In the case of documents in courts of record they were to be transferred to the record office as soon as they attained the age of twenty years and no papers of that age were to be allowed to be kept in any court of record, except on a certificate from the chief judge of such court.

The State papers, on the other hand, are sent at uncertain intervals, as accumulations arise. Formerly no weeding process was employed, everything being sent to the record office, from the most important document to the most useless fragment, but that was changed in the case of court records, before any special act was passed on the subject, only such papers being sent as the chief judge of each court certified to be suitable for permanent safe-keeping. The State papers, as well as the court records are now dealt with according to the provisions of the Act 40 and 41 Vic., Cap. 55, and by rules made in accordance with it, framed by the Master of the Rolls, who is Keeper of Records. By the provision three inspecting officers are appointed to consider the propriety of destroying papers that appear to be no longer useful. When this is under consideration an officer specially conversant with the records of the department to be dealt with is nominated to act with the inspecting officers, his appointment being subject to the approval of the Master of the Rolls in his capacity of Keeper of Records. Minutes are to be kept and schedules prepared describing the documents it is proposed to

destroy, which are to be submitted to the Master of the Rolls and, if approved by him to be laid before Parliament. The ninth rule may be quoted in full, as it is of general interest :

"They" (the inspecting officers) "are to take every precaution against the inclusion in the schedules, of any document which can reasonably be considered of legal, historical, genealogical, or antiquarian use or interest, or which give any important information not to be obtained elsewhere."

Every precaution being taken, the papers scheduled are sent to the Comptroller of the Stationery Office to be destroyed. The weight of these useless accumulations was, at the first destruction, 29 tons 13¾ cwt., varying in subsequent years to an average of about eight or ten tons annually.

Additional rules were passed in subsequent years but these relate chiefly to documents not removed from the department.

The regulations as to the examination of papers deposited in the Public Record Office are made by the head of the department from which the papers are sent, and applications for the relaxation of the general regulations must be made to him in respect to papers from his department which it is desired to examine, the officers of the Record Office have no authority to vary them, but no difficulty need be apprehended if proper cause is shown for the relaxation.

#### FRANCE.

The system in France is much more complicated than that in England. The national, departmental (that is provincial) communal and charitable archives have since 1884 been united in one branch in the Ministry of Public Instruction, subdivided into four sections, a chief being at the head of each, with a sub-chief and staff of assistants. The departments of War, Marine, Colonial and Foreign have their own permanent archives; the other departments transfer their documents every ten years to the national archives. In the four Departments of War, &c., the archives form part of the ordinary service of each. In the Department of Foreign Affairs the care of the archives constitutes two officers, one historical, the other the papers to be open to the public, which are those anterior to July, 1830. The direction of these is in the hands of a commission of the diplomatic archives reorganized by a decree of 1882. Those of the Marine are under the superintendence of a superior commission of archives established by the presidential decision of 29th April, 1883.

The papers open to the public are accessible at certain hours, under proper regulations.

#### GERMANY.

The conditions in Germany are so different from those in Canada, that it need only be said that the different German States have their own archives, with a general supervision exercised by the central department, known as the Royal State Archives, at the head of which is the President of the Ministry of State.

Arrangements are made for the periodical destruction of useless papers, but the regulations for this purpose are of a somewhat complicated character.

## ITALY.

Papers no longer required for current affairs are all deposited in one record office, called the Record Office of the Kingdom, established in 1875. The officers employed are attached to the Department of the Interior whose budget supplies the expenses. Other departments have respectively the right to inspect or to authorize the inspection of documents which have been deposited by them.

By the regulations now in force (September, 1894) no control is exercised over the Record Office, such control can, however, be enforced by the departments depositing documents or by inspectors appointed by the Ministry of the Interior or by an inspection instituted by the Council of the Record Office.

No information has been received from Rome respecting the treatment of useless documents.

## SPAIN.

The corps of archivists in Spain was constituted in 1858, for the purpose of reducing to order the accumulation of papers. It is a distinct branch of the civil service, a course of three years in the superior school of diplomacy, which forms part of the University of Madrid, being required to qualify for application for appointment. Vacancies are filled by competitive examination on special branches.

When papers are no longer required for current use they are placed in the archives of the departments in charge of the corps of archivists. In the case of the departments of War, Marine and Foreign Affairs, special technical knowledge is required on the part of the archivist for the care of their documents. After an indeterminate time the records are transferred to Alcala de Homares in the neighbourhood of Madrid. Until that transfer they are kept in the archives of each department in charge of the special officials above described. After the transfer to Alcala de Homares, they are under the care of curators, taken from the corps of archivists. This is also the case at Simancas, Seville and other depositories of State papers.

No information has been received as to the disposal of useless documents.

## THE NETHERLANDS.

The State papers previous to 1813 (the date of the restoration of the independence of the Netherlands, after having been annexed to France) are in one general place of deposit in the Hague. Until the erection of a suitable building no regulations have been established for the care and control of the archives, subsequent to 1813, nor will be until the building is erected for which a vote was taken in 1894.

The State Archivist and other functionaries of the record office (*Depot d'archives*) are attached to the Ministry of the Interior and are under the superintendence of the Archivist General of the Kingdom in the Hague.



With respect to the papers previous to 1813, unless important reasons exist for their exclusion, strangers as well as inhabitants of the Kingdom are admitted to consult, make extracts from, or copy the documents.

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The 1st of July, 1867, would appear to be a suitable date for the separation, from that time, of the public papers of Canada, from those previous to that date that being the beginning of a new system of government.

Until a consolidation is made of the papers before 1867 stored in each of the departments, no general regulations can be framed, and great delay necessarily arises from the confusion caused by the papers being scattered in various departments.

Until, however, a suitable building is erected for the deposit of the papers, it is impossible to carry out any general or effective plan. Such a building need not be of an expensive character, one or, perhaps, two stories high would be all that is necessary, absolutely fire-proof, with the heating apparatus outside, 16 feet from floor to ceiling in each room, with a light iron gangway running round the shelves, midway of the height, so that the volumes on the shelves could be easily accessible. It would be necessary also, that the building should be so arranged as to be easily added to as increased accommodation was required. If there is room in the quadrangle formed by the two parts of the western block, that would seem to be a suitable place for the erection of the required building. It should, however, be so situated as to be of convenient access in the event of information being required by Parliament or by any of the departments. The place I have suggested would be suitable in this respect, and a building there being in an unobstrusive position, its plain appearance would not detract from the general architectural character of the others.

As it is evident that until a suitable building is erected no transfer can take place of the accumulated papers, some time must elapse before they are removed. As each department should transfer its papers, in such order that they may be immediately available for reference, advantage could be taken of the delay to have them put in order. It is not possible, with so many departments to signify exactly how the papers should be arranged. In some cases that may be done by subjects where there is a variety under the control of one department. In others the whole might form a continuous collection, bound in manageable volumes, but in all cases the arrangement should be strictly chronological. In each volume an index should be bound so as to enable papers to be more or less fully indexed for facility of reference.

The papers when transferred to the general archives office should be accompanied by a schedule, these properly arranged and, perhaps, printed for the use of the officials only, could be formed into a catalogue indicating in which room the different collections were deposited and their general nature. For convenience the title of Archives Office might be retained, that name being the same in English and French.

In arranging for the destruction of useless papers the utmost care is required to prevent the shadow of doubt being entertained that any political influence is used for the preservation or destruction of any documents. The system established in England may be referred to as a model for the consideration of papers believed to be no longer required for any purpose. Great care must, however, be taken that no document, which gives indication of others of importance, although of no consequence in itself should be destroyed. Experience here has shown the importance of this precaution, confirmed by the ninth rule established by the Keeper of Records quoted in full in a previous part of this memorandum.

The provinces being proprietors of the public lands (except in the North-west), having control of the courts, municipalities, education, marriage laws, &c., papers in the departments relating to those subjects, if there are any, should be transferred to the Provincial Governments. It is no doubt desirable to have copies of all such papers on record in the archives office, but the originals undoubtedly belong to the Provincial Governments and should be in their possession. In referring to land papers, it may not be out of place to call attention to the great danger from fire to which the surveys, titles of land, &c., in the North-west are exposed in the attics of the Eastern Block, which are filled with wooden partitions, dried like tinder, only requiring a single spark to cause a most disastrous conflagration involving an irreparable loss.

In forming an Archives or Record Office, a collection of important reference books should not be forgotten. Every work relating to Canada should be on the shelves. A valuable collection has already been made in the present Archives Branch, but more could have been done in this direction had funds been available. In this respect so far as relates to Canadian affairs, the collection should be as complete as possible, but no money need be wasted on rare and expensive originals if correct reprints can be obtained, which in the case of valuable historical works is usually the case at a moderate cost with generally the added advantage of careful annotation.

DOUGLAS BRYMNER.

Archivist.









U.C. 7. 12/2/52

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